# The Mahāsiddha and His Idiot Servant



John Riley Perks

# The Mahāsiddha and His Idiot Servant

John Riley Perks

**Crazy Heart Publishers**
Box 687
Putney, Vermont 05346



*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publicaton Data:*
Data has been applied for.
ISBN 0-9753836-0-4

*Cover Photo:* Deborah Lazar
*Design:* Flocksholm Design

# Dedication

*For Chögyam*

"His Holiness said that you are a pioneer."

Somewhat surprised, I responded, "What happened to the idiot servant?"

"Oh, that too," he answered, laughing.

# Acknowledgements

To describe how this book evolved would require several volumes of narrative—combining those who were for and those who were against its publication. The original drafts were all handwritten in school exercise books two years after Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's death in 1987. Some of the early drafts seem to have survived, although I hear from reliable sources that the original manuscripts were all destroyed.

This present book could not have been produced without the constant effort, enthusiasm, and dedication of my closest students. Even at times when I, myself, grew tired of the constant revisions, my students insisted on extracting the exact details of my relationship with my teachers. I would like to thank Margaret Junge for her tenacity and diligence. I also appreciate William Burns for his friendship and steadfastness. Both Peg and Bill worked unstintingly to transcribe the original manuscript from written form into the computer. I am also very grateful to Julia Gray for her intuitiveness, dedication, and devotion. Julia spent every Monday for a year with me working on the manuscript, often making revisions and suggestions in the text which were invaluable. I also appreciate Ralph Quinlan-Forde for enthusiasm

and entrepreneurship early in the project, and Laura Witt for her sharp intellect. Also, to Michael Billingsley, Donnalee Dermady-Minney, Kathleen Pew, Vale Burns, Suzanne Moran, and Cecelia Blair for their continued questions and interest go my thanks.

There are many dharma brothers and sisters mentioned in this book, all of whom I would like to thank for their comradeship and inspiration on the path. For purposes of privacy, I have changed the names of some of the people in the book. I particularly wish to thank Max King, Mipham Halpern, Neal Greenberg, Ron Barnstone, Walter and Joanne Fordham, Bob and Shari Vogler, Dr. Mitchell Levy, Sara Coleman, Jeanne Riordan, Betsy Sharp, Judith Smith, William Gilkeson, James and Carolyn Gimian, Dr. James Green, Dr. George Marshall, Debby Kruck, Michael Root, Gerry Haase, Martin Janowitz, Thomas Ryken, Jan Watson, Dennis Southward, Hudson Shotwell, Sergeant Major Grant MacLean, and Captain David Rohn.

Further, I am indebted to my dharma brothers Douglas J. Penick, for his unending love and kindness to me over many years of hardship; Kidder Smith, for his continual support of Celtic Buddhism; and Kobutsu Malone Roshi, the mad death row Zen chaplain, for his comradeship always.

Sophie Octavia Perks, my daughter, who following in the family tradition became an attendant to Khandro Rinpoche, is an ongoing inspiration. And, finally, to Nora Riley Perks, my wife, for her consistent dedication in always asking the right questions and her unending care and personal love for both me and this difficult time-consuming project, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks. To all others who helped or hindered and thus ultimately helped form the contents, thank you.

# Foreword

*By Douglas Penick*

Throughout almost all human history, we have learned how to live and how to produce the things we need to live from our relationship with a teacher. Initially, this teacher was a parent and, depending on the culture, the things that were taught were often circumscribed by gender. Cooking, pottery making, weaving, some shamanic traditions, and so forth were usually passed from mother to daughter. Warriorship, hunting, farming, and priest-craft passed from father to son.

Part of this education is not just learning the necessary method or technique to achieve a desired result, but actually acquiring the inner sense or feeling of the entire activity. Transmission of this inner sense is the essence of the teaching and distinguishes mechanical, repetitive labor from work that is alive.

This transmission cannot exactly be taught directly but arises from hard work and from the relationship, the devotion, and the love shared by teacher and student. Transmission may be a product of accumulation, but it often becomes manifest in one particular moment when it becomes clear to both teacher and student that it has occurred.

A lovely example of such a moment was recounted by the renowned Santa Clara potter, Margaret Tafoya. Margaret's mother, SaraFina, was, in addition to being a farmer, cook, seamstress, mother, and midwife, a potter famed for her large storage jars and for the beauty of form and polish in all her work. She also realized that selling pottery could become a major aid in her family's survival, and made many innovations to appeal to the tastes of tourists and galleries in northern New Mexico.

In addition to requiring their help in tending to all the many other household needs, SaraFina taught her children to make pottery. Year in, year out, they assisted her in all the arduous aspects of this art. SaraFina was insistent on the highest standards in preparing clay, forming, sanding, decorating, polishing, and firing. This method of pottery making was without any kind of mechanical aid; there were no wheels and no kilns.

One day, her duties as a midwife required that SaraFina stop working on a large pot. Three or four layers of coils were still lacking. Margaret watched as the pot dried in the air and realized that soon it would not be possible to complete it. She asked her father if she should do so. Fearing SaraFina's temper, he replied that she could, but that she should not say he had approved. With considerable trepidation, Margaret completed the pot. When her mother returned, she examined the piece carefully. She looked at her daughter and said: "You did exactly what I would do. Thank the Lord you can do it," and she kissed her. Margaret Tafoya, even near the end of her long life, remembered the exact date and time when this occurred: 9 p.m., October 4, 1926. (*Margaret Tafoya,* M. & L., Blair, Schiffer Publishing, 1986. p. 98)

In most spiritual traditions and in many secular ones, it is simply not possible for the student to receive such transmission without unswerving devotion and endless, dogged hard work. Transmission can only be received with one's entire being, and

this cannot happen in the absence of complete devotion and surrender.

This aspect of transmission is most explicit in the many Hindu and all Vajrayana Buddhist traditions. The literature there is full of teachers who inflicted extensive and often seemingly crazy demands on their followers, and of students who wavered and persisted and wavered and persisted in following their teachers' commands. Often, the student would lose heart and sometimes, overwhelmed by the sheer pointlessness of it all, would reach the point of suicide. But in giving up one's ambitions completely, it is finally possible for transmission to take place.

The student always frames this goal in terms of his or her own experiences and desires. But if the student is fortunate, he or she will find an authentic teacher and if so, this notion will be uprooted and vaporized.

In the West, this kind of path seems disagreeably at variance with our facile sense of individual free will. Even for those who have undertaken such a journey, there often remains the hope that having endured rigors and austerities, one will attain some kind of realization or enlightenment and thenceforth be able to do and teach as one wishes. This is not so. The path of devotion is unending, and having met the mind of one's teacher nakedly, whether briefly or completely, there is only further devotion and further surrender. One's life continues to unfold in the light of that.

As Ven. Trungpa Rinpoche stated, "The guru is the representative of the phenomenal world." Thus there is never a moment of an action or an accomplishment where one does not see the footprint or the smile or the sneer of one's teacher. And this is a source of great challenge and great joy.

Ven. Seonaidh Perks has written a superb and vivid account of his journey with the Ven. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche that is unsparing and true. Trungpa Rinpoche came to the West in the

late sixties and resided in the U.K. and the U.S. for the rest of his life. No other Buddhist teacher has embraced the culture of the West so extensively and entered the lives of his students so completely.

The Vidyadhara would actually do anything to communicate the awakened state on the spot and was tirelessly inventive in finding new forms to this end. Ven. Seonaidh Perks played a crucial role in the creation of many of the Vidyadhara's institutions, and his story of their mutual dance is hilarious, wild, shocking, and poignant. This book is a rare thing. It presents a relationship that is more intimate than sex, more risky than battle. Perks gives us a vast fermentation of love, not limited by convention and not ended by any notion of result.

*Douglas Penick*
*Chodzin Paden*
*Magyel Pomra Sayi Dakpo*

# Introduction

This is a story about transformation from mindlessness and unconsciousness to the realization of how mind functions in all its aspects, and the implications of that realization in everyday life situations. It is also a story about an enlightened teacher and a student who was completely ignorant. During that relationship Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche said at different times, "You should write about how we worked together."

"You mean how we created the Court and military?" I inquired.

"No," he replied, "How our minds work together."

"That sounds like a huge task," was my observation.

"Just keep it simple," he advised.

"When should I do this?" I inquired further.

"When you have the time," came the answer.

It is important that the reader have some knowledge of my state of mind before and during my years with Rinpoche. While at the time I had no understanding of my mental constructs, looking back from my present perspective I can offer the following summary.

I have labeled myself an idiot. From the point of view of enlightened or realized mind this is certainly so. All beings are attached to their personal karma. Karma is action, the working of cause and effect whereby positive actions produce happiness and negative actions produce suffering. Personal karma means that you are born into a family and you take on the karma of that family. You take on the karma of the town, the state, and the country in which you were born. Then you take on the karma of the training you receive at various educational establishments. Even if you rebel against all of this, you take on the karma of the rebel.

For instance, a British karma could be one of having a stiff upper lip in all situations, which means that when catastrophes are occurring you say nothing is happening or "Let's have another cup of tea." While historically this is portrayed as being heroic, it is actually quite stupid, because it negates reality at the most basic level.

One cannot blame people for this. It is simply the way that karma operates. A pig is ignorant and symbolizes ignorance in Buddhism. But one can't blame the pig for being a pig, as that is its nature. Similarly, it is the nature of human beings to be attached to their karma, their emotions, and their habitual patterns. In this scenario there is no notion of enlightenment or realization to interrupt the cyclical patterns, and there is no reason for one to feel guilty or blame others.

From the historical point of view, I was born in Kent, England, in the year 1934. My father was a band master and a music teacher. My mother was his housekeeper but she was also a practical nurse. Both of my parents had been married three times each and had children from these various marriages before their love affair produced me and my two sisters. They were never married and lived together for twelve years including the beginning and end of World War II. My father was in World War I as a stretcher bearer. The mental anguish that he and many suffered during that conflict was immeasurable. My mother was a spiritu-

alist—driven there as refuge from the constant insanity of war and poverty.

This was the family karma that I inherited. I also received tremendous love and adoration from both my parents even though they were living in a dark period of warfare and violence. Like everyone else I was conditioned early on in traditional English values, education, and culture. When the war came I fought to survive, as was required of all intrepid, resilient Englishmen. And I fought to survive to be John Perks. I put extreme effort into maintaining my "own-ness." My only thought was how to maintain myself. I had no understanding of the feelings of others. I just reacted to their emotional displays and covered myself the best way that I could in order to maintain my ego. If, for instance, a person in authority was angry with me I found ways to please him or, alternatively, to go behind his back to create subterfuge and outmaneuver him. If a person in authority displayed love toward me I would endeavor to please him so that the love situation would continue.

Concerning the phenomenal world I had no understanding at all. I simply attached myself to the pleasure or pain that it gave me. Either it pleased me by being sunny and smelling like roses or depressed me by being froggy, dull, and smelling of manure. My own-ness and my self-ness had to survive above everything, and I would do anything—literally anything—to maintain my "self."

Trungpa Rinpoche used to say that I was very self-reliant. I took pride in that until I discovered what it meant. Then I took another pride in it. From the mental point of view I was at the mercy of my emotions. To complicate this further, when emotions were displayed in the English society in which I had been living, one was punished. So I became a kind of secret agent, hiding my emotions, or else became a renegade.

Being at the mercy of emotions is like being imprisoned by passion, aggression, ignorance, or depression. Ironically, when

you're imprisoned that way you don't recognize it. You have no knowledge of "I." It is just a state that you are in. It feels very bad and painful but you don't know that there is any other alternative. Perhaps on a sunny day you might feel better, but then when it rains you retreat back to your habitual pattern of passion, aggression, ignorance, or depression.

Thoughts flow through our minds in an unending stream, rather like shingles on a roof that overlap each other. I considered these thoughts to be reality, whether they were created by emotion or just popped up out of the blue, like bogeymen. The world was a very fearsome place for a mind such as mine.

Today, we live in a society that feels that the best way to handle people's ignorance is to punish them, eliminate them, or medicate them. That is because having to deal with another person in an open, nonjudgmental manner requires extreme mindfulness and attention. One would have to become selfless and totally open. Few people undertake this, as it is painful to have to give up one's self. Yet everywhere people are seeking that state of open, compassionate love for each other. That is why Buddha and Jesus are revered by so many. They are examples of the infinite compassion for all beings that so many of us strive for. The obstacles to that attainment are peoples' possessiveness and attachment to maintaining their self-identity and their ignorance in seeing this.

Ignorance, with which I am personally very familiar, does not understand enlightened mind. Ignorance just operates to maintain "self," rather like the pig, head down, turning over the sod under its nose. It doesn't look around, it only knows "piggy-ness." It's not that the pig is not beautiful. The pig is supremely beautiful and supremely intelligent in maintaining its "piggy-ness," but it also suffers enormously because of its habitual karma and its attachment to the unending display of emotions or neuroses which it sees as reality. Even in making love to its partner the pig will suffer. It may be a tremendously successful lover but be unable to receive love. That is, the piggy wants to control even that aspect of his or her world. Receiving love might be extreme-

ly painful because it would have to give up a particular notion of self. In the union of masculine and feminine, selflessness can be experienced only if the predetermined states can be surrendered. Such a love never occurred to me. I was somewhat like a bull in rut. My only interest was in my own persona and presenting it in such a way that it could receive the adulation it required. This is an explanation of my mind and how it operated at the time I met Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's mind was one of boundless infinite compassion for all beings. It became this way through his many lifetimes of meditation practice and also through the love, compassion, and training from his teachers. He was born into a lineage and a society where these attributes were regarded as the supreme treasure. While he was not born as an enlightened being he attained enlightenment as a gradual process of his training with his teachers.

Such a compassionate mind is not attached to any notion of self but is totally dedicated to the benefit of all beings. From the point of view of a pig-mind it is very difficult to understand the mind of an enlightened person. In the beginning the pig-mind might become alarmed that it can find no habitual pattern in the enlightened mind to manipulate for its own benefit. Then it might conceive from its own point of view that the enlightened mind is crazy, because the pig-mind is unable to obtain the power that enlightened mind displays. At that point it might give up and become confused again in all types of illusions. Seeking some type of ground it may see these illusions as reality—whether they manifest as visions or spiritual accomplishments—and again may cling to the new concept and try to make a reality out of it.

The actual reality of enlightenment is beyond ordinary description. From the point of view of my mind at the initial meeting with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, I was convinced that I could attain such a state by scheming or by personal manipulation. Needless to say, I failed in that endeavor. That failure produced the attributes in my mind of both hopelessness and

negation, thinking that the whole thing was crazy in the first place. Those obstacles had to be worked through.

The attachments and clingings of my mind were undermined by the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in ordinary daily situations. He continually disarranged my personal egotistic reality and sense of self. Additionally, I was engaged in the meditative activities of shamatha vipashyana, ngöndro, and the Vajrayogini sadhana. Vajrayogini is called the sadhana of the Coemergent Mother—meaning the union of samsara and nirvana. This was a situation of being in the middle of a sandwich with the guru on one side, the yidam or deity on the other side, and myself as the ham in the middle. The whole thing was driven together by a diamond nail that can never be removed.

The stories in this book are told from my unrealized point of view. From the realized point of view something else was happening. I was being given what I wanted, which was to become enlightened. But that enlightenment meant having an open, compassionate heart. I could not "get it" by any other way than giving up self. I fought tooth and nail against the very state that I sought because I was terrified of the notion of emptiness and no self. In these stories I appear a fool, which is what I was.

I remain continually in awe of the realizations and compassion of my three teachers: Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and His Holiness, the sixteenth Karmapa. I am also totally indebted to my sangha brothers and sisters who were fellow students of these teachers and engaged in their own paths toward enlightenment. I am more than indebted to my own students for forcing me to explain what happened in minute and painful detail. And I am in awe of their heroism and determination to also seek realization, even though their teacher is an idiot.

Perhaps if you yourself are a seeker, or are on the path to true complete enlightenment, these stories might give you some comfort. If a total idiot could become a realized person, even though he himself has not attained true complete enlightenment, then

such an endeavor should be easier for you. Also, you could think of us as being comrades-in-arms, united in transforming passion, aggression, ignorance, depression, and illusion into enlightened mind. We could, you could, create or work toward a world that displays the compassionate reality for all beings which is the heart of Buddha, the heart of Jesus, and the heart of many teachers throughout history and who still exist in the world today. We could create an enlightened world for all beings.

If I had only one wish it would be that you never give up on your devotion to the enlightened state, no matter what personal sufferings you might experience. It need not matter if you are a murderer, thief, liar, terrorist, bank manager, housewife, Buddhist teacher, electrician, blacksmith, or someone without vocation in your journey in this impermanent realm. May you meet the heart of true, complete enlightenment, surrender your self-ness to it, and experience the total pain, total suffering, total joy, and total compassion of that state.

Whatever confusion is displayed within these pages is the confusion of the author. Whatever realization emanates is the realization of the teacher. The union of these two is the mutual love affair that is the basis of Buddha's lineage.

*Seonaidh Riley Perks*
*Vermont, 2003*

# Contents

*Chapter 1*

# Black Birth

War, war, war, unending war, teaching only more war.

The feet came out first. There was a question as to whose feet, since they were blue-black because of the umbilical cord wrapped around the neck. Also because, days before, the mother had picked up an exposed electrical cable and received an instant shock. She had felt the baby turn in her body from head down to feet down. And because there was the Indian woman next door in the semi-detached house who had committed suicide. Because the almost black child was put into hot water and then cold water to stimulate breath, there was some question as to its identity—my identity.

Later, as a child, hearing the story of my birth made perfect sense to me. Since I was born dead the spirit of the Indian woman had entered my body. I was born male but I felt female. I would often dress in my mother's clothes, putting on her make-up and perfumes, her stockings and her underpants. I had a great fear of electricity and the idea of electrocution in the electric chair was supremely horrible. The blue-blackness of the body made Celtic sense, as a reminder of the pigments used by the island warriors

of pre-Christian times. Later, a Chinese doctor took my pulse and clapped his hands over his mouth, exclaiming, "Birth, no breath!" Gasping was a common feature of my breathing.

Even before I began school I suspected there was something disturbingly different about me. I saw things differently from other children. Colors were all mixed up for me and I could not identify colors with the right names when asked. I would say the name of the first color that came into my head. Everyone would laugh because they thought I was joking. But in actual fact I really did not know. Or was it that the colors did not appear to me as they did to other children? Then there was the light that emanated from life forms. Dogs, cats, people, rabbits, birds, and bugs seemed to have lights coming from their bodies. My judgment of distances expanded and receded sometimes during the day. Almost always at night my bedroom would become very large. Then the room would shrink so small that the ceiling was just inches above my head, with the window becoming the size of a postage stamp. Then everything would expand, with the ceiling suddenly forty feet above me and the window now the size of a shopping mall window. I would close my eyes when this happened, but the blackness behind my eyelids would continue to alternate between small and vast. There was no escape and the world became very jelly-like, shimmering, and wobbly. Sometimes it was difficult for me to tell living beings from dead ghost beings. I was always scared and anxious, as there was no one to tell all this to and I was afraid of being sent away to a place for crazy kids.

As a young boy with an active imagination I fabricated fantastic story after story about myself. The most famous one was my insistence that my father was a sheriff in Texas. I had a tin pin-on star to prove it and I fought any boy who tried to dispute my myth. My real father was someone like Gene Autry or Roy Rogers, not the man who cried and shook and hid under the kitchen table when the bombs fell. Not the man who lay soaking in sweat, trembling from malaria that he had contracted in India

during the First World War. Not the man who chain-smoked Players and Craven A cigarettes, his fingers stained brown, who washed his black hair in spinach juice, who looked at me from a great distance. Who, as my mother said, was not a real soldier but a bandsman stretcher-bearer picking up the dead and mutilated bodies from Gallipoli to Flanders. A mustard-gassed living ghost who never smiled or played. His only refuge was music, which he taught to homeless boys. Conducting in his black uniform, he became alive in the vibrating sounds of quavers and semiquavers, in notes that I was unable to decipher. One time he tried to teach me the cornet, but my lips broke out in raw cold sores and the hollowness returned between us.

He had lived in a World War I trench, cooking his breakfast of bacon and eggs in a tin pot, and then making his tea out of the bacon tasting water. Born in 1888, he was a living ghost by the time of my birth in 1934. Suffering and unable to die, he was terrified by the prospect of having to live through another war. The only story he told me of his childhood happened before he entered the Army at the age of fourteen. His father, who had worked at the Birmingham Firearms factory, had been very concerned that my father was too small for his age. He filled my father's boots with horse manure and made him put them on and stand in a closet to see if he would grow. Everyone said my father had green eyes like my mother's, but to me they looked brown. He hardly ever spoke to me and never hit me. His last and only gift to me was a set of lead toy soldiers in full military uniforms of the Coldstream Guard's Band, frozen with their instruments of silent sound.

My mother was a Wicca spiritual healer and practical nurse. My grandmother, who was a nurse physician, would take my mother along on her rounds. One of the stories my mother liked to tell of her childhood travels with my grandmother was about the death of Freedom. Freedom was the first name of an old woman of the village who lived in a cottage where the animals still lived in the bottom half of the house, providing winter heat for the humans who lived upstairs. Word had come that Freedom

was dying and my grandmother and mother went to the house where the old woman now lived alone with a cow. They climbed the ladder and found Freedom lying on her straw-mattress bed, her breathing shallow and her consciousness coming and going. My grandmother told my mother to stay with Freedom and to lay her out after she died. This entailed plugging her anus and vagina with cotton and tying closed her mouth. Then my grandmother left to visit another patient.

It was night and although it was not my mother's first experience with death, it was her first time of being alone with a dying person. She was terrified. The wind blew out the kerosene lamp. My mother clung to Freedom's hand, asking and praying for her not to die before my grandmother returned. The cow below made sounds like demons ascending the ladder and with the labored breathing and twitching of Freedom, the screeching of owls, the yelling of night hawks, and the house moving in the night wind, my mother was near to fainting.

It was at least two hours before my grandmother returned to find my frightened mother still grasping Freedom's hand. Lighting the lamp and inspecting Freedom, my grandmother exclaimed in a sharp tone, "Dolly, Freedom is dead. Go and get the Vicar's dining room table leaf and we will lay her out." I can always see my mother as a fourteen-year-old girl terrified and beset by spirits, yet crossing the village alone at night to return with the table leaf under her arm to lay out the dead Freedom. It was this story and her act of bravery that always inspired me to go beyond my fears. Even at an early age I admired her willingness to tell me this story, not only of her bravery, but of her fears in handling the beings and spirits that surrounded her.

It was the autumn of 1939 and the rumors of war were in everybody's conversation. I was just beginning to attend classes at the local grammar school and my father would often pick me up in the afternoon. He would put me on the saddle of his bicycle and push it home, walking beside me. I remember asking him, "What's war?" He said, "It's like when two people get angry with each other

and they start to fight." And I said, "Does that mean German people and English people will fight?" And, he said, "Yes."

On September the third at 11:15 in the morning I stood on the apple tree stump in our back garden in the town of Sidcup, County of Kent, some twenty miles south of London. My father had the wireless radio hooked up outside so we could all hear the Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, speak. I remember him saying we were at war. The adults were very serious and many began to cry. Then the sirens sounded and the children, alarmed at the wailing sound, cried also. I was five and my childhood of war had started.

The announcement of war helped relieve the tension. The adults were now preoccupied with survival and the war effort. My father took action and dug a great pit in our back yard. In the yellow clay we piled up sod bags and he put corrugated tin on top to make a roof. It was a replica of his trench in France during World War I. He made bunks for us. It looked great and we played war, killing Germans. Then, about a week after construction, it rained very heavily and the fortification became a water hole with bunk beds floating in it. The very next night a soaked, mud-splattered policeman came knocking at the back door. Apparently, one of our window blinds had showed some light and he had crossed our garden, only to fall into the water-filled bunker. My mother dried him off by the kitchen stove while he drank the ritual cup of tea.

The next shelter we had was a steel table about the size of a king bed inside the house. We all slept on the mattress beneath it with our gas masks next to us. My parents' thought was that if the house fell on top of us during a bombing raid someone would be able to dig us out. At that time, unknown to me or my sisters, my mother had a stash of cyanide she planned to give us if we became trapped in rubble or suffered from gas exposure. We all expected the Nazis to invade and my parents made petrol bombs to throw at the Germans.

There was a Jewish man who lived across our road who cried in our kitchen. He used to play the violin with my father. He had a bald head and always wore velvet slippers. He was given tea. The home guard played war with an old Bren gun-carrier track tank. They threw chalk bags at each other. We picked them up and threw them too. We filled sandbags to pile in our front gate. We stuck tape over all the windows. My stepbrother, Charlie, came back from Dunkirk, his uniform torn and stained. He smelled of whiskey. He cried in our kitchen. He told us that Nappy, my father's music student and our lodger, had been killed in the sea off the coast of France. Charlie continued to cry, snapping the hammer on his empty service pistol over and over again. He was given tea. I began to associate drinking tea with times of crisis. Every time somebody sang "Polly put the kettle on," I would tremble with anxiety.

In one bombing raid the entire front of our house, all three stories, was destroyed. We had a large canvas draped over the house front while it was rebuilt. I had to be evacuated and was sent on my own to Cornwall. My mother took me to the train station with my gas mask and a luggage label tied to my collar. She said goodbye.

In Cornwall I was housed with three other evacuees. Two were teenage girls from London and then there was Freddy, a boy of seven like myself. He had fleas. One afternoon he and I were playing on a bridge, throwing sticks into the brook on one side and then running swiftly across to see them whirl out from under on the other side. I saw the lorry coming across the bridge, but Freddy did not and it ran him down. Some soldiers coming by took me home. This was the first time I had ever seen someone die. It was fast.

After Freddy died I slept in the same room with the girls. We would play Truth, Dare, and Promises. I would always choose Dare and lose. They would rub my penis to make it hard and then dare me to put it into their vaginas. I always did and was puzzled why they liked it so much. Although my penis got hard I had no orgasm or sperm.

Every night I walked to the post office with the hope of getting a letter from my mother, but they were few and far between. Although I was now school age, my early classroom encounters in Cornwall were a series of escapes or ejections. I was kicked out of one institution for breaking another boy's arm while playing King of the Castle. I ran away time and time again and got the cane time and time again. In yet another school I set fire to the wastepaper basket under the teacher's desk in which were all the class records. Their charred remains freed me to be sent back home to Sidcup.

I was then sent to my Aunt Lil's house near Portsmouth. One early morning we were picking mushrooms in the field when, with a loud roar, three German bombers came over not more than five hundred feet above the ground. They were so close I could see the men in the glass nosecones and the big black crosses on the wings of the planes. We ran as the ground around us spurted up clods of earth. At full gallop I jumped into a ditch of stinging nettles. The roar of the engines was so loud I couldn't even hear the noise of the machine guns. Moments later the planes were gone and no one was hurt.

There was a German prison camp near Aunt Lil's house and two of the prisoners, Kurt and Carl, would come over to the farm to help. Carl liked to kill things and he pleaded with my aunt to let him kill the unwanted kittens from the barn cat's litter. I watched, fascinated, as he strangled each one with his hands and threw the bodies on the manure pile. Kurt made me a wooden airplane and gave me rides on his back. He cried when I came to the camp to say goodbye, taking my hand through the barbed wire fence and kissing it. I was returning home. I had no tea for him.

The war had scattered our family in all directions. My mother was still in Sidcup, driving a fire truck for the town. My sister was in the Land Army, stationed on a farm at some distance away. My father was in Devon, helping to care for the homeless boys he taught, all of whom had been evacuated there. We had a young woman in her early twenties as a lodger and occasionally a couple of billeted soldiers from Canada, Australia, and even Egypt.

Food and supplies were in short supply and my mother readily agreed that I become the family provider by stealing. I imagined myself as Dick Turpin, the highwayman. I raided, I stole. At night I took a sack and crept into a farmer's yard, outwitted the dog, and stuffed four chickens from the pen into my sack. I took them home to my approving mother. I stole coal from the train cars at the railway station. During the night air raids, when everyone was in the shelters, I entered the empty, unlocked houses. I stole odd things that would not be missed: knives, forks, food, soap, door mats, kettles, flower pots, jam, hair brushes, sugar tongs, napkins, towels—just one of each thing. It was the excitement of being a shadow, ghost-like. John the Phantom, moving unseen through their empty world. I could imagine them returning home, saying, "Where did I put that comb, that empty box of pins?" Then the objects would become forgotten, like the sock lost in the washing machine.

The Phantom hid in the clothes washer in the bathroom to watch the young woman lodger in our house undress for a bath. There was a small window in the top-filled washer from which I intended to peek out. I heard her come into the bathroom and run the water. I listened with held breath to the unfastening of clothes. I was just about to raise my eyes to the window when a thought struck me. What if she saw my eyes in the washer window? How could I explain why I was in the washing machine? I struggled with logical explanations. "Well, Miss, I was looking for a lost sock." Who would believe that? I couldn't think of anything plausible, so I just hid in the bottom, trapped in my own adventure, listening to the splashing of water, until she dressed and left. Then I lifted the lid and vanished.

During this time I began attending the Sidcup Elementary Modern School for Boys in my home county of Kent. The English schools had a form system where the first year you entered into either Form One-A, One-B, One-C, or One-D, depending on the assessment of intelligence. For those of questionable mental capacity there was Form One-X. Based on my

behavior and general strangeness, this is where I was assigned. In part it was because of the big mistake I made of telling a teacher at school about my dreams and visions. On and off for years I had had these glimpses of other worlds that I considered to be as real as everyday existence. The school authorities wanted to send me to a doctor, but my mother would have none of it. Then they tried to beat it out of me, but I responded with either lies or silence until they gave up.

Form One-X was quite a relief for me, as we were expected to be crazy. There was Nutty Herman, who drank ink, Philip the Clubfoot, and Plug Fenton, who had holes in his shoes from riding a bike without pedals. We had William the No-Sight, whose glasses were as thick as bottle bottoms, and Michael the Butcher, who pulled the heads off of birds and flowers, mice and bugs. There was James, whose mouth was so full of saliva it overflowed his chin, covering his shirt with stains, and Charlie the Trembler, whose head twitched and hands shook. Filling out Form One-X was Smitty, who was fat, Hamish, who was from Scotland, Jimmy Big Cock, Paul, who was strapped into a wheelchair, Cassidy, from Ireland, and me, John the Silent, who had decided not to talk to adults.

Being in Form One-X was like finding my family. They were like me. We were an outcast clan of the other school forms. Mr. Jones from Wales was our main teacher, and we all knew something was wrong with him because he was not in the war. Mr. Jones was exiled to Form One-X, and because it was assumed we could not learn the regular curriculum, he developed his own. He had that singsong Welsh voice and he read us lots of stories: *Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe, Robin Hood, Harold: Last of the Saxon Kings, The White Company, Arthur,* and *Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni.* Time and again we would get Mr. Jones to tell us the tribal stories and myths.

All of us young boys in Form One-X became real Celts and Boudicca was our Goddess. We never worshipped God because he was a male and for us all the tribal gods were women. We built a shrine to Boudicca in the woods and would paint ourselves blue.

Blue was the Celtic bond in our tribe, and we would always wear something blue—blue tie, blue socks, blue shirt, whatever. Crazy Herman used to drink all our blue ink with the hope that it would turn his skin permanently blue. We were all surprised when it did not. But that did not stop us from experimenting.

Half the day we would have classes and the other half we would do something useful like work in the garden or polish floors. Mr. Jones trooped around the school with us on our afternoon jobs as we swept the school halls, mopped the bathrooms, and dug, weeded, and planted the school gardens. We took turns pushing Paul in his wheelchair, which became a chariot for us, the "One-X Celts." The other forms were the Romans, marching from class to class in double columns at the sound of the period bell. We were ragtag, skipping, hopping, slouching, and hobbling along with Paul in the chariot, with our mops and brooms as swords and spears. We shot spitballs at the Romans as they marched past and thumbed our noses at the administration.

We often made tea for the teachers as part of our duties. One day my pal, Plug, pissed into the tea water to see if the dumb Romans would notice. They didn't! They thought it tasted just fine, even special! After that discovery we all excitedly took turns until we came to Wally. Wally was part gypsy and I suspect he had really strong and exotic pee. When the administration began to investigate the school water supply, it was getting too close to home, so we stopped. We knew they thought we were dumb, and it never occurred to them to wonder what we thought about them. In fact, all of us in Form One-X figured out very quickly that if the teachers thought we were crazy by the way we acted we would be free from their regimentation. Outside of our group we were viewed as crazy. Within the group we accepted each other with our individual oddities.

Once the Head Master, a retired army officer, came to our class and was pleased that we were learning so much about history. He told us a story about how great the Roman army was because it brought law and order to Britain. We could not believe our

ears. We sat frozen in silence. He must have thought we were enthralled, because he went on for hours about Roman accomplishments. And at the end he said, "Boys, you are doing so well that you will soon be out of here and into the regular forms."

That was it. We had an emergency meeting down at the end of the playing field.

"We have to go underground," said Cassidy, the Irish boy, "just like the IRA."

"No, no!" said Plug. "They're just a bunch of murderers." We all looked at each other in desperation.

"Why don't we just act more like ourselves?" suggested crazy Herman.

That was it! We all turned to look with new admiration at Herman. He saved the tribe that day with his brilliant idea. Later we lost him. This happened when the woodworking teacher, who bullied everyone, hit him about the head in a rage and Herman lashed back. Other teachers came running in and dragged Herman off to the Head Master's room.

We did not see him again until the next morning when the whole school assembled in the hall for the daily singing of school songs, hymns, and Roman anthems. The song we liked best was Blake's "And Did His Feet in Ancient Times." Most of the words were tribal until the God part. After hymns there would be announcements and then punishments, which could mean anything from having your name read out loud to being called up in front of the whole school. This day two teachers marched Herman into assembly. Between them a stool was set up on the stage. Herman faced the school while the charges were read out. We were in the front row. He looked at us. I remember the pain and anguish in his terrified eyes. Then an amazing thing happened. Seeing us, his heart-brothers, he winked.

It was the bravery of a true Celtic warrior that winked. After that they dragged him over to the stool, took down his trousers, and gave him twelve cuts of the cane—one for each Fucking Apostle. Toward the end he sobbed uncontrollably. We flinched

at each stroke. We never saw Herman again after the caning but we heard they sent him to a school for boys on a training ship. We imagined him chained to the oars in a Roman galley. But we had learned our lesson. Never hit a Roman on his turf and never let them know what is going on.

Form One-X graduated to Form Two-X, and the tales told by Mr. Jones of the historical figures Nelson, Wellington, and Drake subdued the Celtic wildness. The sun of the British Empire rose in my mind. There were Churchill's stories of his adventures in the Boer War. And here he was, still alive, nonchalantly smoking his cigar in the face of the hysterical and demonic Hitler. I was ready to fight on the beaches as we changed from wild Celts to the Thin Red Line. Paul in his wheelchair became the artillery. We patrolled with wooden rifles, our bare bayonets glinting before the enemy—the nose-picking, stupid, dirty, Nazi horde. It was just us, defending all that was good, all that was English, all that was fair play, all that was clean. As we marched along we would sing:

*Goebels he only had one ball*
*Goering had two but very small*
*Himmler had something similar*
*But poor old Hitler had no balls at all!*

For Christmas of 1944 my mother took us to London on Boxing Day to see the stage show *Peter Pan* and afterwards, as a special treat, we went to a Chinese restaurant. I clearly remember walking into the entrance of the restaurant with its unfamiliar smells and sounds and looking up at a large golden statue of the Buddha, who looked back at me smiling. There was something quite shocking about that encounter, and while eating I kept looking around to see if he was watching me.

A plague of measles and pneumonia struck many of the children at our school. From my bedroom window I looked across the street to the bedroom of Alice Green with whom I was distantly in love. She contracted pneumonia and within a week had died.

The curtains were drawn and I visualized her lying waxen-like upon her deathbed. I too became ill with both measles and pneumonia. I heard the doctor talking to my mother in the hallway and he said, "If his breathing becomes labored, call me right away." I think they were expecting me to die. The curtains of my room were open and I remember looking into the sky at the sunrise and being somewhat delirious with fever. I imagined the golden Chinese Buddha appearing in the sky and coming down toward me and entering my heart. The fever broke and gradually I recovered. From then on I was always attracted to images of the Buddha.

Toward the end of the war I hardly ever went to school, but I read constantly. Even now I can hear my mother saying, "John, get your nose out of that book." I thought that escape was possible within books. Perhaps I could be like Allen Quartermain with my Lee-Enfield rifle, strolling unafraid through the snake-infested jungles where even the natives were afraid to go. Or perhaps like one of the endless array of Victorian writers who trekked, hiked, climbed, or hacked their way through impenetrable wilderness, bringing afternoon tea, cricket, morals, manners, and stiff upper lips to unenlightened barbarous tribes. Or a white-skinned, blonde Tarzan, with only a knife, knowing more than even the black natives. Taking tea would never be a problem because he was an English lord. In turn I reveled in becoming Hornblower, Alfred, Mallory, Scott of the Antarctic, Robinson Crusoe, Robin Hood, and Ulysses. Sometimes I was Hawkeye, with my rifle and my two trusted Indian servants, in the American wilderness.

My stealing stopped. I took a test at school in the last part of my second year. The masters were astounded by the results. I was Mr. Jones's success story. I was put into Form Three-B. Being English instead of a Celt had paid off. Relentlessly I set to work. I read all the required books by the end of the year. I was top in exams of Form Three-B. In my last year I was put into Form Four-A and never saw the boys in Form One-X again. I watched Lawrence Olivier in the film *Henry V* with the fullness of pride that I was English. A great Union Jack hung on one wall in my

room. The cross of St. George the Dragon Slayer hung on the other. I carried it to London for the Victory Over Europe parade. Vera Lynn sang "We'll Meet Again."

At fourteen I left school, worked for a while at the K. B. Radio factory in Foots Cray, and then became a commie waiter at the Savoy Hotel. At fifteen I was a bar boy at the University Club in London and saw Churchill puffing on his signature cigar. I signed papers to join the Royal Navy but was rejected because of my color blindness. Somewhat disappointed, I applied to the Merchant Navy and the P & O Line, which would train me to be a steward.

By coincidence my mother wrote me at this time, offering to pay my way to the United States and also that of my older step-sister, Mickey. Some years earlier my mother had married an American sailor and had left for America with my two younger sisters. My father, at the age of sixty-four, ran away with a twenty-two-year-old woman to a cottage by the sea. I, alone as usual, filled out the emigration forms at the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square and decided that whichever papers came through first would decide whether I entered the Merchant Navy or journeyed to America.

The American papers came first, by post. We were to sail aboard the USS *America* from Southampton the first week of March, 1950. Our old house in Sidcup was sold and in the back garden I built a bonfire with a wooden toy ship on top. I lined up the lead soldiers of the Coldstream Guard's Band, formally saluted them, and lit the fire. The blue baby, the Indian woman, the mental retard, Form One-X, my father, the Celts, and the war all went up in flames. I left the ashes. From the tourist deck of the USS *America,* I took the acceptance papers from the Merchant Navy's P & O Training School and dropped them into the expanding gap between ship and dock. They fluttered into the oily waters. Within a week I would be sixteen, English, and in America.

*Chapter 2*

# Illusions of America

Fictional reality, images flood my mind endlessly like overlapping shingles on a roof.

The crossing was rough. The ship plowed through a March storm of sixty-foot breaking waves. Most of the passengers were seasick and there were buckets in all the cabin-ways. The crew was constantly mopping up vomit. But me, I was in my realm, the open sea. I ate every meal and purchased a two-pound box of Whitman chocolates and ate all of that too. Food went through me like air. As thin as a rail, I was six feet and 135 pounds.

After the storm the ship crept past the Statue of Liberty into a gray, ice-filled New York harbor. Most of the passengers had come as emigrants or refugees. Me? I came as John, the English Adventurer, expecting to see John Wayne striding the wooden sidewalks of New York with horses and wagons rumbling by. Instead I was met with deep concrete canyons occupied by blowing garbage and yellow cabs.

In the 101st Street East Side apartment where we lived everyone spoke Italian. On Sundays, with me dressed in my English tweeds, we ate great feasts of pasta. I was introduced to Maria,

also sixteen, who had a body that would put Venus to shame. Her uncle, Jimmy the Bandit, jealously guarded her, so I could only look at her from a distance, while stuffing my mouth with her mother's spaghetti. Her skin was so olive it almost made me faint.

It quickly dawned on me that if I wanted to have something like Maria I would need to be successful at some type of work. Within the period of a few years I became in rapid succession a Western Union messenger, a shipping clerk, a gas stove repairman, a telephone receptionist, a watch repair apprentice, a magazine salesman, a footman for Jock Whitney, and a waiter at the 21 Club. All of this was great experience but I was not impressing Maria and I was getting restless, so I thought I would head out West.

I purchased a 30-30 lever-action Winchester Saddle Ring carbine, a pair of Acme cowboy boots, and an outfit of roebuck jeans and jacket. I purchased a bus ticket to Las Vegas, Nevada, and practiced saying "Howdy" in my best western movie imitation. I burned my English tweeds and set off on a Greyhound, eating chili with beans at every bus stop we pulled up to. Along the way I actively imagined my new persona.

I decided to change my name to Chris Scott, who was surely a distant relative of Randolph Scott. I was born in Bitter Creek, Wyoming, and was sent to England for schooling because we were relatives of Scott of the Antarctic exploration. It all sounded quite airtight to me and surely would impress any Maria I met. Not leaving anything to chance, I purchased an authentic Indian beaded thunderbird necklace. I figured if I ran into any redskins they would most certainly recognize me as a long-lost brother and invite me to marry the chief's beautiful daughter, Maria.

Las Vegas was not impressed with me when I finally got off the Greyhound bus five days later. I spent the night at the Salvation Army shelter and headed out for a real cow town, Mesquite. Arriving, I slung my kit bag and carbine over my back and swaggered, John Wayne style, into the adobe café. With my last silver dollar I ordered chili and beans and in a loud voice, with

my best Texas accent, put out the offer, "Does anyone around here need any horses broke?"

In a masterful stroke I flipped the Bull Durham tobacco tag so it hung out of the top of my denim jacket pocket and turned around on the swivel counter seat to face the breakfast-eating crowd. Nobody reacted except the waitress, who backed away from me and retreated into the kitchen. From behind the swinging door I heard laughter, which temporarily punched a hole in my act. I rallied, however, and picked up my gear and headed out the door.

I had not gone far up the sand street before the waitress came running after me, grabbed my sleeve, and said, "Sonny, try Harley at the gas station; he needs help." My first impulse was to keep going on to St. George, Utah. Sonny, indeed! A gas station attendant! Not for Chris Scott of Bitter Creek. At that time I was near the gas station, so I thought, Well, what the hell. I found Harley, a man in mechanics' overalls. He said, "Well, I need someone to feed my cattle in the feed lot, back of the garage. Can you ride a horse?" He looked at me with curiosity.

"You bet," I answered, with a confidence born of imagination.

"Well," he said, hesitantly, "You can sleep in the garage and I'll pay you three dollars a day. Okay?"

"You bet," I answered.

"There's a saddle and bridle on the fence over there. Saddle up the black in the corral and I'll take you over to the feed lot."

I walked over to the fence, slung the saddle across my back in Randolph Scott style, took the bridle in my left hand, opened the gate, and for the next hour chased the black horse all over the corral. Then I heard a loud whistle and the horse headed for Harley and the two men who had come to watch the display.

"Hey kid," said one, "bring that saddle over here." I did just that.

"You might need a blanket," said another.

I was just about to answer that I was not cold when he flung it across the horse's back. They put on the saddle and bridle. "Kind of rusty, ain't you, kid," chuckled one. "Here," said Harley, and he handed me the reins. What happened next should have worked, as I had seen it in the movies enough times. I put my left foot in the stirrup, my hand on the saddle horn, and was about to pull myself up into the saddle when the horse put his hoof on the toe of my right boot. I could not remove my left foot from the stirrup and the horse would not move his hoof from my foot. The three guys were rolling around with laughter. To make matters worse, I let go and fell backward on the ground, my foot still in the stirrup and the other still pinned under the horse's hoof. This produced more convulsive laughter.

Harley let me stay and paid me three dollars a day to entertain everyone. After that I got a job on a ranch in Nebraska where I lived in a real bunkhouse with three other hands and earned four dollars a day with food. But after six months I got fired for shooting the ears off one of a team of horses, which happened this way.

It was in the fall and flocks of ducks were migrating south over the Nebraska cornfields. Chuck, one of the hands, pulled up to me in a manure spreader with a team of horses. "Quick, Chris," he yelled at me, shoving a 10-gauge shotgun into my hands. "Get in the back; there's a flock of birds in the top field." I jumped into the empty manure spreader and Chuck whipped up the horses and headed for the field.

Unfortunately, he had the spreader wagon in gear, which meant the chain floor used to move the manure to the back of the wagon into the whirling arms of the spreader was running under my feet. I had to keep hopping up and down in the back to avoid getting caught up in the tracks. Chuck was so excited he didn't hear me yell to stop. The sky was thick with low-flying ducks. "Shoot! Shoot!" yelled Chuck, as I fell back into the wagon. I tried to aim the gun into the air and pulled the trigger.

We both saw the left-side horse's ears disappear in smoke. Chuck managed to stop the horses about a mile down the road.

After a chewing out by the boss I decided I'd had enough of Western life. I got a suit at the Salvation Army store in Omaha, burned my cowboy outfit, sold my Winchester, and headed back east to settle down.

Because of my farming and ranching experience out west I secured a job as a farming instructor in a state school for retarded young adults. I was back in Form One-X, except now I was the teacher or, as it turned out, the "Farming Gang Boss." It was more like a prison than school, even though it was called a state training school. The farming department had about 100 Holstein cows and extensive fields of market-garden vegetables, from tomatoes to spinach.

I was given a gang of about fifteen teenagers who would have fit very well into Form One-X, and I took them out into the fields to weed, pick, hoe, dig, rake, burn brush, or whatever was needed or invented to keep us occupied. It was my first decent job and I felt like finally I was someone. I was twenty and could look forward to all kinds of health plans, insurance, and a retirement package.

Now that I had a good job, a wife was needed to complete the picture. I successfully courted a young secretary by the name of Helen who worked at the local school. We planned to be married in June. With our combined wages we rented a small house near the training school and furnished it on the hire-purchase plan. I made no attempt to sleep with Helen because this was the woman I was going to marry and that meant purity beyond mere sexual lust.

It was a grand wedding. The church was filled with flowers, tuxedos, and white gowns. A singer sang *I Love You Truly* from the church balcony and I was in wedded, blissful heaven. There were champagne, toasts, and the wedding cake with the effigies of Helen and me on top of three tiers held up by three columns. The bride threw the flower bouquet and we were off on our honeymoon to New York City. That night we tried to make love, but when I came to touching her vagina she cried and ran from the room. Honeymoon jitters, I said to myself. Be patient, be calm, be kind. Remember, this is the pure love of your life.

After a year, wedded bliss had turned to wedded hell. We still had not consummated our wedding—no sex. We went to counselors, psychiatrists, and fortune-tellers, all of no help. Finally, I sold the furniture, quit my job, and left forever. I went to New York and got a job as a summer camp counselor at University Settlement Camp in Beacon, New York. I had sworn off marriage for the rest of my life when I met Ruth, a young, intelligent, beautiful Jewish girl. I say girl because she was only seventeen at the time and I had just turned twenty-one. I fell deeply in love.

A court somewhere in Georgia annulled my marriage to Helen and I asked Ruth to marry me. She refused on the grounds that while she felt I was wildly romantic she did not think I would make a reliable or stable husband or future father. I was heartbroken—devastated. I went to New York City and got a job as a group worker at University Settlement House. Still devastated and depressed by the rejection of Ruth, I became very drunk one night and cut my wrists in desperation. But, being in the state of intoxication, I rolled over onto my wrists and woke up in the morning to find the pressure had stopped the bleeding. My recovery was slow, but in any case I was determined that one day I would marry Ruth.

I registered and took art classes at the Art Students League and Columbia University. One of the professors at Columbia said if I really wanted to learn to draw as well as Leonardo DaVinci, I should get a job at a mortuary and draw dissected bodies. Taking him upon his word, I got a job dissecting aortas from cadavers at St. Vincent's Hospital. One day a doctor came into the mortuary and asked me if I knew anything about pumps. I said I did and he asked if I would help them fix their pump. It happened to be one of the first heart-lung machines, whereupon I was offered a position as a surgical technician with his team of doctors and nurses. It was there that I met and later married Sylvia, a young nurse from Britain. Ruth, I heard, married a Jewish doctor by the name of Joe.

Sylvia and I returned to England and settled in Devon. She had a nursing job at the Exeter General Hospital and I secured a

position at St. Loyes College for the disabled, where I was the preliminary training instructor. In addition to work, I began to attend art school part time, which eventually became two years of full-time enrollment.

One fine spring day I received a telephone call from Ruth informing me that she had divorced Joe and that she was coming that early summer to stay in Paris. I quickly obtained a scholarship to study art in Paris that summer. Sylvia was not included in the plans.

Ruth and I met in Paris and began a torrid love affair. We were unable to let go of each other, even for a second, and knew we had to be together forever. In the midst of our passion Sylvia showed up at the hotel, having tracked me down. There was a tremendous row, with anger, accusation, and tears. Because I could hardly afford to eat in those days, I was quite faint from the buffeting of the emotional storm. Somehow, though, the whole turmoil only served to bring Ruth and me closer together.

Before Ruth returned to America to attend graduate school at the University of Illinois, we decided to live together. I was to follow her in two months after I had acquired a divorce from Sylvia. Ruth was four months pregnant with our first child when we were married in Greenwich, Connecticut. Ruth's parents were not at all happy about her daughter marrying outside of the Jewish faith—least of all to a ne'er-do-well like me without any prospects of a job. However, I was always one for grand ideas.

After a year of graduate school, Ruth and I decided to start our own school on the east coast of America. I borrowed some money and bought a car to take her and our newborn daughter to the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York. The following summer we started a summer camp for exceptional children in Elizabethtown.

The camp was well attended and Ruth and I considered it a success. The second summer's program was winding down when we received an invitation to attend a cocktail party given by some educators in Lake Placid, New York. I was having a conversation

with a gentleman from Rhode Island who worked in the correctional system there. It was the early 1960s, and a lot of teenagers were getting arrested for smoking marijuana. When I asked him what it cost the state to house these young people he replied that it was about eleven thousand dollars per year. I rashly said, "Okay, I could do it for six." Immediately he said, "If you can, I will send you five people next fall."

Ruth and I borrowed money from a rich friend and purchased a 600-acre farm in Paradox, New York. It was nestled in a picturesque valley with a barn and old farmhouse. We contracted with Connecticut and New York, in addition to Rhode Island, and that fall we started Highland Community Residential School. We had thirty students and ten teachers. Everybody worked on the farm in the morning and in the afternoon we had academic schoolwork. We trained the students specifically to pass the New York State Equivalency High School Exam. During this hectic turmoil of establishing a school, Ruth, who had been pregnant, gave birth to our second daughter.

While this outline seems somewhat conventional, my fantasies about reality continued to display eccentricities. Warfare in particular—or wars—were a continual fascination of mine. We played out this fascination under the guise of teaching history. This was something akin to *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty.* We divided the school and staff into two groups and over several days we acted out the Roman Celtic wars. In these wars the Celts always won. We also reenacted the Roman and Greek wars—again the Romans were soundly defeated.

One Saturday we bused the entire student body to Ticonderoga to see Charlton Heston in the movie *Khartoum.* Inspired, we spent the next day reconstructing an old cabin on the property with which to play out the story of the beleaguered Khartoum. The majority of the students acted as the fanatical Mahdī hoard, dressed in white sheets and bearing spears. I, as Gordon himself, was holed up in the derelict cabin with a few hardy students, a meager food supply, and

two six-pounder muzzle-loading cannons. These cannons were loaded with gun powder and steel wool so that when they were fired at night a shower of hot metal sparks would shoot out about 50 yards all around.

Sure enough, that very night, sounds were heard in the large field that stretched before us. I ordered the gunners to stand by. When the sounds grew even louder I gave the order, "Open fire." The cannons roared out, sending flaming steel wool across the fields. Through the night air we could hear the Mahdī's fanatical hoard screaming as they ran off with burning sheets.

The next day the student "horde" was seen reforming itself under the command of two of the resident teaching staff. They had acquired new sheets during the night and had constructed a battering ram from a telegraph pole on a set of wagon wheels. The sheeted horde made their approach across the field and began to beat down the door of the cabin while we threw gunpowder-loaded tennis ball bombs in amongst them. They finally withdrew, but we knew that we could not sustain another assault.

That night my soldiers and I snuck down to the barn and located several buckets into which we poured cow manure and a few dead rats. This was our last hope. The plan was to retreat to the rafters when the Mahdī hoards invaded the cabin, pour the offal on them, and then surrender.

Sure enough, they attacked that morning and managed to throw an explosive devise into our ammunition box—which sent rockets and fireworks exploding within the cabin. We rushed into the rafters and hauled up our buckets. The maddened yelling and screaming mob of Mahdīs swarmed into the cabin, whereupon they were drenched in cow shit and dead rats. Screaming, they ran out and my lads and I nobly surrendered.

The wars escalated and our equipment and props improved dramatically. Two U.S. Naval whaleboats were donated to the school, which we immediately rigged with four-pounder bow guns and one-pounder swivel guns. Our seamstresses and tailors

fabricated 18th-century Royal Navy uniforms for the students and teachers. We purchased cutlasses, pikes, and muskets and set forth to retake the colonies for King George. We took part in reenactment battles at Crown Point, Fort Ticonderoga, and Fort William Henry.

While this was a coed school, the boys were the main participants in the Royal Navy reenactments. The girls, feeling a bit left out, requested an all-girl trip on Lake Champlain in the whaleboats—to which I agreed. It was a warm September day when we set off down the lake with the girls sweating at the oars, singing "Row, My Bully Girls, Row." They then stripped off their shirts and I stood at the tiller looking down at these bare-breasted Amazons pulling away as a cloud of red Monarch butterflies engulfed us. The boat was white on the outside and red on the inside. The autumn colors on the shore glided by. The sky was cloudless and there was the hum of an occasional dragonfly. The sound of the oars squeaked rhythmically in the oarlocks. The fantasy was complete and the environment cooperative. If realized in the moment, the mythology of the situation could have been seen as an omen of past, present, and future—on the spot.

I could reinvent myself from one second to another without hesitation and could be completely immersed in whatever fantasy reality it was that was created—whether it was a house, children, marriage, school, being an artist, a teacher, a cowboy, or a naval officer. Each could be accounted for without any real sense of reality.

But the interactive emotional reality of people surrounding me swelled and exploded. The fantasy of my living happily ever after with Ruth ended because of my infidelity. We had terrible fights and we decided that I should leave. As I left our dream house forever, Ruth in a fit of rage shouted, "And take this with you!" She threw a statue of the Buddha at me and it hit the doorpost next to my head. I picked it up and vanished. She found

security in a seemingly more stable Joe and married him, and through the law courts, acquired custody of my daughters and ownership of the property. I was devastated. I wanted to kill myself. I was engulfed in depression for two years—my fantasies having failed me, or me having failed my fantasies. Then I met Chögyam Trungpa[1] Rinpoche.[2]

---

[1] During the 1974 Seminary, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche explained, "The word *trungpa* is an honorific term, which literally means 'attendant.' Ideally when somebody serves their guru twenty-four hours a day, they begin to get some glimpse of the workings of his mind. They begin to get messages and reminders of awareness and things like that. So the best way to develop is to be the guru's servant. That's the tradition."

[2] Rinpoche means "greatly precious"; a title given to especially qualified masters.

*Chapters 1 and 2*

# Commentary

*In my early life I learned to relate to everything in terms of war. World War II had made it clear to me that in order to defend myself I needed to have some type of a weapon close at hand. These were almost always guns. I lived out my fantasies of my wartime experiences in reading biographies and histories of different world conflicts.*

*I saw my relationships with others in terms of domination or submission. When challenged on any issue I would resort to outrage and anger. I had very little or no insight into my own behavioral patterns. In my world, I came first. It's not that I didn't try to please others in order to get what I wanted, but there was no real realization of other people or their suffering or their struggles. It was only me. My path was to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.*

*I, like everyone else, had redeeming qualities. I could be kind and generous. And although I had built a fairly secure shield against pain around myself, there were times that this shield could be penetrated by the intense suffering of others. But rather than investigating this pain I would turn to depression with feelings of hopelessness and nihilism. I can remember from early on thinking that God didn't give a shit, so why should I.*

*At times I had altruistic feelings of wanting to change the world and the society. I wanted things to be better. But I was not inclined to start with myself, and all my attempts to change things brought more chaos and more confusion and more bewilderment and more depression.*

*My reality consisted of being caught in the realm of ignorance and bewilderment which was essentially quite painful. In order to escape or to try to escape the pain I went from one situation to another, hoping that the next event or person or situation would somehow solve the basic problem and alleviate the pain.*

*I had the idea from very early on in my life that what was required of me was to have a good job, find a good wife, have a good house, and live happily ever after. This was reinforced by the society I was born into. My whole culture with its pop music about love and marriage perpetuated this type of living happily ever after. The problem was that the idea didn't match the reality. However, it did not occur to me to give up and it was a lot easier to blame others for my failures.*

*I wanted to be good, which in my mind meant true, pure, chaste, moral—and above all I wanted to be loved. I felt that if I could attain these things, I could be loved. But these things were in direct conflict with my real desires and passions. And I had no idea of how to integrate these conflicts. I also had no idea of how to integrate my spiritual and temporal life. I lived by a list of things that were good and a list of things that were bad. There might have been gray areas but these remained virtually unexplored.*

*It's interesting perhaps to look at the mythology involved in one's life. There is a certain karma attached to any birth. In my case it was a traumatic birth; the colors black and blue; the Indian woman in the semi-detached house who committed suicide; the extremes of hot and cold water; color blindness; not being sure of one's gender; having visions; and being labeled as retarded. In a very strange way it made me, later on, a good candidate for Buddhist*

*vajrayana[3] practices. From that point of view it's interesting to look at one's so-called negative personality traits as perhaps being pathways to further wisdom.*

[3] Vajrayana, Sanskrit for "Diamond Vehicle"; a school of Buddhism which was practiced in Northern India during the middle of the first millennium. Enlightenment in Vajrayana is the realization of non-duality.

*Chapter 3*

# The First Seminary

The idiot egotist seeking power discovers a diamond and thinks teaching is a trick.

The first moment I ever saw Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, I felt an overwhelming connection to him, which was both baffling and inexplicable. He had a Buddhist center in New England which was really just a farmhouse and barn. There was also a big army tent set up in which Rinpoche gave talks and the students did meditation practice. Rinpoche was going to give three talks over the weekend about a Tibetan Buddhist farmer called Marpa. A friend of mine, George, who looked and acted like Michael Caine, had told me that he had been out drinking with Rinpoche and thought he was a great guy. He mentioned that Rinpoche had been in a car accident and was a cripple as a result. People called Rinpoche "Rimp the Gimp," which he did not seem to mind.

I had driven up to the Buddhist farm and signed up for the weekend. Equipped with my sleeping bag, I planned to sleep out in the fields. The center had a meeting on that first morning, as it was the custom to assign jobs. I volunteered to wash dishes and

repair the gravel driveway coming into the farm. As I was fixing the holes in a bend of the road an old battered car came along, and there, sitting in the backseat, was Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He had on blue bib overalls and a plaid shirt. He was brown with long jet-black hair, a round face with beautiful brown eyes, and a smile like the Buddha himself. He gave me a wave of his hand. It was as if I had been struck by warm electrical energy. I was immediately attracted to his presence and was determined to speak to him.

I finished my chores and did my meditation, of which I was kind of proud because I had sat for a whole hour, entertaining myself with remembering all the movies I had seen. In the evening I went to Rinpoche's talk about Marpa.[4] Rinpoche came into the tent supported by one of the students as he limped toward the chair in which he was seated to give the talk. I could not understand a thing that he was saying about this chap Marpa. In fact, it seemed to me that Marpa was not a real farmer but a translator who was treating one of the farmhands, Milarepa,[5] very badly by having him build silos all over the farm.

On looking back, if I had tuned in a little, I would have found the spirits were rolling around in the grass laughing their heads off at what they saw in store for me. Rinpoche mesmerized me. After the talk, I approached him, looked straight into his eyes, and said, "I want an interview with you." I was looking at an

---

[4] Marpa the translator, 1012–97; renowned Tibetan yogi; student of Naropa; devoted himself to bringing texts from India and translating them into Tibetan. He was a farmer and was the root guru of Milarepa.

[5] Milarepa, 1025–1135, was the most famous Buddhist saint of Tibet. Milarepa became Marpa's student at the age of thirty-eight—seeking his root guru to purify his karma. He attended Marpa in the role of a servant. Marpa subjected Milarepa to extraordinarily harsh training such as having Milarepa build towers out of stone one after the other on Marpa's command only to have to take them down and assemble them somewhere else. Marpa initially also refused to give Milarepa teachings. The work and treatment by Marpa caused Milarepa such despair he fled twice and was near suicidal. After many years, Marpa provided teachings, including transmitting the teachings of Naropa, and he prepared Milarepa for a life of solitude. Milarepa lived for many years in seclusion in mountain caves in the Himalayas. Milarepa became the root guru of Gampopa.

open plain with a giant sun rising in it and thousands of birds flying in a blue sky. He said something like, "We will see," and as I walked away I asked myself, "Johnny, what the fuck was that?"

That night I drank a bottle of vodka with a chap named Tom Rich,[6] who was a baker, and his pal Ken. I got so drunk that I was seeing double, so I got up and started off for my car, a small white Opel two-seater. The wind was coming up and storm clouds were moving in from the west. I dragged out my sleeping bag and looked around for a place to sleep. Not twenty feet away I saw a tent with the door flaps blowing open and inside was a naked girl starting to get into her sleeping bag. I crawled into her tent and without a word kissed her and she kissed me back with passion and energy.

At this point I was not sure what world I was in, but I went ahead anyway. It was beginning to thunder and the lightning was flashing. Then it started to pour. I took off my clothes in a hurry and this spirit-woman helped me with them. I took her hand and led her out into the storm, and we lay down in the tall grass and started to make love. It was like making love to the earth itself. When lightning flashed I could see only parts of her body. Her nipples were hard and rigid and I drank the juice of her body, which was salty and mixed with rain. I had my tongue deep inside her, and between the rolling thunder I heard her moan. We went on until the storm passed.

She went back to her abandoned shelter and I struggled over to my car, crawled under it, and went to sleep. I woke at daylight and banged my head on the car exhaust pipe. Surprisingly, I did not have a hangover.

There on the ground were my clothes in a neat pile. "That was some dream," I thought, but then looked at myself and saw that I was nude. I never take my clothes off when I sleep out-

6 Tom Rich was later to become the Vajra Regent, Ösel Tendzin, Chögyam Trungpa's dharma heir and Regent of the Trungpa lineage.

doors! As I was dressing I also realized there was not a single bug bite on me. Then paranoia hit me. Was this girl real? There was no way I could recognize her except for an erect nipple.

Nobody was looking at me and the Buddhists were getting ready to do their holy trip, so I joined in and went along. Intently I looked at every woman for a reaction but not a one even looked familiar.

George and I were sent over to Rinpoche's house to build a doorway from his bedroom to the outside balcony. While George and I worked on it I said to him, "I'm going to be Rinpoche's butler. He needs a butler." I had never been a butler, although I was a footman in England when I was fourteen and I worked later as a bar boy at the University Club in London. George responded with an assessing look. "Why not," he said. "You will have to get an interview with Rinpoche. They know you were Head Master at a school for wayward kids and they think you have money." George was talking about Rinpoche's students who were the administrators. "Go and speak with Marv. He's Rinpoche's secretary."

After lunch everyone was sitting around on the lawn relaxing and talking about meditation and Buddhism and Marpa's farm. Marv strolled over toward me. "I'm going to talk this guy into getting me an interview with Rinpoche," I thought. He came over.

"Hi John. I hope it's alright to call you John?"

"Fine," I answered.

"Would you like to have an interview with Rinpoche?" It blew my mind.

"Sure, that would be great."

"Well, let's say this afternoon during meditation period."

"Great, I'll be there."

I stood at the bottom of the stairs leading up to Rinpoche's office. I had been there about an hour trying to read a Buddhist book but I couldn't understand it at all. When people passed I read intently, pretending to be a good student. When I got bored

even of pretending, I began to read the bulletin board. There was a list of students going to a seminary with Rinpoche. I'll be on that list, I said to myself. I'm going.

At that moment Marv appeared and took me up the creaking stairs to Rinpoche's room. Opening the door there he was, seated on a chair. There was a pillow on the floor. Marv motioned for me to sit on it and then he left and I was alone with Rinpoche. At last! Then there was silence. We looked at each other. I was slightly embarrassed and turned my eyes away. My heart was racing and I tried desperately to calm myself down. Then he said, "We have heard of you."

"I've heard of you," I laughingly replied.

He smiled, saying, "Welcome to the family." His warmth engulfed my body.

"Thank you, sir," I said somewhat feebly, but feeling more relaxed.

"What are you doing now?"

"Nothing."

I watched the dust specs dancing in the light of the sun. Then he said, "Would you like to go to Wyoming? We are having a small get-together there."

"Oh, the seminary."

"Yes."

"Well, I'd love to go, sir."

"Okay. Speak to Marv about the details."

I stood up and we shook hands. "Welcome, Johnny." As I left the room I noticed that someone had drawn a spider on the wall. In a bit of a daze, I walked down the stairs to the outside and a woman approached me. She had brown eyes and a harelip. She looked at me and said that it was wonderful last night and "Thank you so much." We kissed and she walked away.

At that time I was living on a boat in Camden, Maine. After my meeting with Rinpoche I drove back to Camden to get my gear for the trip to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where the first

seminary was to be held. There would be seventy students living in a rented hotel for three months. Notably, among the students was Alan Ginsberg. George, my friend, was also going and we would be roommates. He had his doctorate in psychology and was teaching at a university in Montreal.

When I arrived in Jackson Hole three days later, I found George already there. We got ourselves set up in the ski cabin. I slept on the main floor and George slept in a loft above me. Rinpoche was in Sweden and would arrive in two weeks. The first part of the seminary was a sixteen-day meditation period. We were to meditate every day for ten hours. Since I had meditated only a couple of times, and then for only an hour or so, I wasn't thrilled about meditating for ten hours at a stretch. Ten hours a day for sixteen days seemed a bit daunting to me. But when I looked at the other students, most of whom had been students of Rinpoche's for at least a year and who had done some serious sitting meditation time, I figured I could do it too. The students ranged in ages from twenty to fifty and they were teachers, doctors, students, artists, poets, secretaries, and administrators from Rinpoche's Buddhist Centers in Vermont and Colorado.

I decided that my tactic for making it through the meditation periods would be to pretend I was "still hunting." This was a hunting technique that required you to sit for hours without the slightest movement. If you did move, you did it in ultra–slow motion. It might take several minutes to move your head to look in the direction of a sound. When I hunted deer in the Adirondacks, I figure it took me about forty hours of sitting still to bag a deer. Hunting in New Jersey or Pennsylvania wasn't nearly as tedious—about four or five hours of sitting per deer.

I went through the same routine every day. Eat, sleep, sit. Sit, eat, sleep. I mentally went through all the old movies I remembered and all my old romances. I made up new romances, sexual fantasies, food fantasies, and career fantasies—whatever I could

to entertain myself. Slowly I ran out of material and got fits of what the meditation instructors called "hot boredom" and "cool boredom." It was just plain old boredom to me. The walking meditation periods proved a little more interesting. There was a young Jewish girl who, to the delight of all the men, wiggled her ass as she walked. But soon I was bored even with her ass.

One day I discovered a case of escargot in the food closet. Each night, after the last sitting at 10:30, George and I would invite people over for escargot parties. What I really wanted was to find a woman to sleep with, but everyone seemed paired off or serious about the meditation practice. Everyone, except the administrators, sat for the first sixteen days. We used one of the hotel's cafeterias as the shrine room, and you could watch the cable car go to the top of the mountain. Occasionally, I could spot a moose on the hillside. Up down, up down, up down, up down, down up went the cable car. My mind was running on empty.

Then one afternoon there was a commotion by a window in the shrine room. We all looked and there was Rinpoche making faces through the window. Everyone laughed and I renewed my empty mind with the exciting expectation of spending time with my savior, father, best friend, ultimate mother, and teacher of my enlightenment. My Guru!

The last two days of sitting I spent planning for my eventual enlightenment. Hooray! It shouldn't take too long, I thought. I figured I could probably reach enlightenment in about two years and then I wouldn't have to spend all this time sitting around doing nothing. I would be famous. People would say, "There goes John Perks. He's enlightened. And he did it so quickly!" I imagined this light coming from my head and wondered if it would radiate like a street lamp at night. Perhaps I'd have to wear a hood when I went out. I mused that this was the reason monks wore robes with hoods—in case they got enlightened.

Well, it seemed possible and exciting. The teaching session of the seminary was about to start. It was to be called the

"Hinayana—Mahayana"[7] section. The next section would be the Vajrayana. These were the three great vehicles of Buddhism—like Ford, Chevy, and Mazarati.

There were still sitting periods during the day. Then after supper, around eight or nine, Rinpoche would talk on a different subject. Everybody would get dressed up in their best clothes and go to the shrine room and wait for Rinpoche to show up. It was quite a fashion show. We all wanted Rinpoche to notice us, to acknowledge our potential for enlightenment. One look from Rinpoche was a treasure. He radiated a flash of gentleness, warmth, love, and joy in one look, one smile. All I had to do was plan to catch Rinpoche for myself and then I would have a constant supply of all that gentleness and love.

We always knew Rinpoche was coming when one of the administrators, his close students, came in to set up the incense and check the sound system. The administrators were close to Rinpoche, and I hated those fuckers. Whenever I saw them a gulf of hatred would well up in me. They were a pain in the ass now, but once I had stolen Rinpoche for myself their "generator of love" would be cut off from their circuits and plugged into mine.

I carefully kept these thoughts of hatred to myself, although I intuitively knew Rinpoche could read us all and I occasionally caught him watching me. Rinpoche not only read us but he had plans of his own for us. I had no idea how he read us and what he saw. But I had faith in that golden time when my complete and total enlightenment would occur and all would become clear in a flash of brilliant light.

Rinpoche's talks started with meditation instruction. I had already received instruction from one of the administrators, but Rinpoche's instruction was quite detailed and I found I had not

---

7 Hinayana, Sanskrit for "Small Vehicle" is one of the two general divisions of Buddhism. Practitioners of this school are motivated to become liberated from conditioned existence known as samsara.

Mahayana, Sanskrit for "Great Vehicle." While Hinayana practitioners seek personal liberation, Mahayana practitioners seek enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

been meditating all the time. No sweat, I thought. I can patch that up with a Band-Aid here and there. The talks progressed and I made notes in my loose-leaf folder. I studied the material on the eight stages of consciousness, mindfulness of body, livelihood, effort, mind, and then my favorite—"Art in Everyday Life". They were great talks.

Suddenly, while everything seemed to be going so well, a bombshell fell on my journey to enlightenment—the discovery of *Tathagatagarbha.*[8] I could hardly say it, let alone understand it. The conviction of my enlightenment began to dim and I was completely thrown just by the words: *tagjor, dunpa, tsondru, migme-kyi-nyingje,* and then some fellow called Sam Bhogakaya and the Bhumis. It sounded like an Indian rock group.

*"Choje-Yangdag, tsondru, shunyata, Sosoyangdagpak-Rigpa.* Any questions?" Rinpoche would ask and twenty hands would shoot up. I mean, these guys actually understood this gibberish.

I was in love with Rinpoche but I saw that I was never going to be able to understand this stuff. It just didn't make sense to me. These guys were talking about how the mind works. I mean, I already understood how the mind works—you eat, sleep, go to the movies, fuck, drive, get money, and do it all over again and everything's fine. I began to see Buddhism as an Asian way to brainwash us into . . . into what? Something unimaginable, to my mind.

What could it be that Rinpoche wanted? Maybe he was just kind. The talks began to drag me down. *Paramitas, madhyamika, soso tharpa, hayagriva, akyasangha, samantabhadra, sravakayana, shunyata, utpattikrama.* I was going down fast. Even Sara, the young Jewish sexpot, was clicking along and asking questions like "Is that just the quality of greater transmutation in Maha and the Anu or is that way of working with the Bhindu somehow related to further transmutation or deeper transmutation?" I was sunk. I

---

[8] Tathagatagarbha is buddha-nature. All beings possess buddha-nature, and therefore it is possible for everyone to attain enlightenment. A well-known saying is, "even a worm can become a Buddha."

started to scribble in my notebook. The path to my enlightenment began to look like a damn long hike.

Rinpoche had inexhaustible energy. The talks lasted from ten at night to two or three in the morning. This was fast becoming worse than sitting meditation. We started having the talks before we had supper, and then we didn't eat until the wee hours of the morning. Then a miracle happened. One night Rinpoche was really into one particular talk. It got to be around eleven p.m. and people were getting tired. We had been sitting for ten hours that day and I was bone tired four hours ago. Then the guy behind me interrupted and asked, "Rinpoche. Could we take a break and have something to eat and talk later?"

"I second that," shouted someone else across the room.

"What!?" Rinpoche asked, astonished.

"We would like to take a break," they answered, and personally I thought it was a perfectly reasonable request. Suddenly, like a lightening strike, Rinpoche got up, slammed down the microphone, knocked over his chair, and stormed out of the room. We were all shocked. It happened so fast that everyone was astonished. You could hear a pin drop in the room, it was so quiet. Some people ran out after Trungpa, yelling for him to come back.

"What happened?" I asked George. "Is the seminary over?"

"I have no idea," George said.

We went down to Rinpoche's room. People were outside his door pleading for him to come back and he wasn't saying much. Rather than sit around, I decided to do something practical, so I went off to the kitchen and got some food to take to Rinpoche and the other people. I came back into the room with the food and Rinpoche looked at me and said, "Thank you." I melted at his appreciation. Suddenly I realized, Of course, this is what I can do. It was the vision I had back in Vermont of being his butler coming true. I could make myself useful. I could cook, clean, even wash dishes, which the others hated to do. But washing dishes seemed better than listening to Sam Bhogakaya and the

Bhumis. I could serve. I could serve Rinpoche. The dummy that wanted to take a break saved me.

So I volunteered to do all the dirty work. The jobs nobody wanted, I did—sweep, mop, wash, scrub, iron, and cook. I was in hog heaven peeling a mountain of potatoes. And Rinpoche said, "Thank you. Thank you, Johnny." I settled into a routine. I worked at my chores in the morning. In the afternoon I sometimes ventured out with one of the female students to enjoy a hot pool that I had found in the mountains and a bottle of wine. Everyone was studying and practicing for long hours and we all felt inclined to take breaks. I didn't mind meditating on my schedule but it was getting excessive. I thought, It's not a bad life, this part of dharma,[9] as long as you don't have to meditate for unreasonably long hours.

As for the studying, my mind still could not grasp the fundamental concepts. I could, however, feel holy or special. Looking at the statue of the Buddha and then looking at myself, I thought, Paint me gold and nobody would know the difference. I bet I would look good in robes and I bet I could attract more pussy wearing them. It was really great. I had found my niche in the Buddhist community, the sangha. I was the housekeeper, a job no one else wanted.

Loving the contemplative life was going to be my lifestyle: a small bowl of rice, a gallon of sake, some humble robes, and lots of pussy. Rinpoche did a refuge vow for me, since another chap and I were the only non-Buddhist students at the seminary. The refuge vow is where you take refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha and you become a Buddhist. Rinpoche gave me the name Yeshe Trungpa, which he tells me means "Trumpeter of Wisdom." Wow! I am the trumpeter of wisdom! I look in the mirror and say the name, "Trumpeter of Wisdom." This must mean I can play in Sam's band. I can see the billing at the

---

[9] Dharma—Buddhist teachings

Enlightenment Theater: *Sam Bhogakaya and the Bhumis, starring John Perks, the Trumpeter of Wisdom.*

Sound drums and trumpets, farewell sour annoy,
For here, I hope, begins our lasting joy . . .
Tra Tra Pa Par du du da da tra boom.

If, at the time, I had made a list of my goals, they would have been the following:

1. There was no bullshit about helping other people. Fuck them! I loved Rinpoche. I wanted to be like him and I wanted his knowledge and power. In short, I wanted to become enlightened at any cost.
2. When I was enlightened I would obtain anything and anyone I wanted.
3. Do this in the shortest time possible—without hassles!

Rinpoche lived down the road from the Jackson Hole ski resort in a rented cabin with a young girl from South America. She had a great body, but I felt I should not make a move on her because she was Rinpoche's woman and it might ruin my chances of enlightenment. I was invited to dinner at the cabin. Tom Rich and Ken Green would be cooking with some of the other students, so I took my time with my dress—leather buckskin fringed shirt, navy blue pants, mountain climbing boots, and my Navaho concho belt. An Irishman who had gone native-Hindu, Baghavan Das, was invited as well. He had dreadlocks down to his waist, all yellow and matted like an old rug. Baghavan Das wore his Indian robe outfit, and I drove him down in my small white Opel sports car over the ice-covered road between the high banks of snow.

When we got to the cabin the main room had been cleared of furniture and now was set with a long row of six-foot folding tables and chairs in the manner of a banquet hall with tablecloths, dishes, glasses, and cutlery. I was seated in the middle of the table, opposite Rinpoche's dark-haired consort. The food was passed family style. Everything seemed quite normal for a while. Rinpoche began plying Baghavan Das with drinks. Baghavan Das was crying about the death of his teacher in India and Rinpoche

kept giving him more sake. Totally inebriated, Baghavan Das fell backward from his chair, and like the Titanic going down, he hit the floor with a thump. I rushed over to pick him up.

"Put him in here," said Rinpoche, opening a door to a small room. Tom Rich and I dragged the unconscious Baghavan Das into the room.

"Get some scissors, Johnny," commanded Rinpoche.

I hunted about and came back with some scissors. Rinpoche took the scissors and tried to cut through Baghavan Das's dreadlocks. But the stuff was so thick the scissors wouldn't make a dent.

"A knife!" exclaimed Rinpoche.

I rushed to the kitchen and brought back a carving knife to Rinpoche's waiting hand. He bent over the unconscious head like a laborer, sawing through the heavy hair. I ran back to the kitchen with a whetstone to sharpen more knives that were picked up by eager hands to pass to Rinpoche. Finally, the Irish-American Hindu was shorn of the cordage, which was unceremoniously burned in the fireplace. I had a feeling he would look better without that mat on his head. We all returned to dinner, leaving the unsuspecting sleeping Baghavan Das in the closet.

Rinpoche picked up a large pomegranate in his right hand and spoke across the table to me. "Open your mouth." Half drunk, I did as I was asked.

"Wider," said Rinpoche.

I opened wide, expecting him to throw the pomegranate in. Instead, he squeezed it and a stream of juice arched four feet across the table and into my mouth and I gulped it down. That's quite a trick, I thought. Someone threw a spoonful of pumpkin pie at Bob Halpern sitting next to me. It hit him in the face and in no time the fight was on. Food was flying all over the room, tables were overturned to form barricades. The air was thick with edible missiles. We were all covered with food. It was on the walls and ceiling, dripping from the light fixtures. Somehow Rinpoche was sitting in the middle of the room quite untouched, just calmly drinking sake. That's quite a trick, I thought.

Later, I was quite surprised to find out that in the Hindu tradition, it is customary to cut one's hair off on the death of one's teacher. Baghavan Das showed up in the shrine room several days later wearing a gray suit with white shirt and tie. Everybody applauded.

*Chapter 3*

# Commentary

*Here I was again alone in the world—my personal possessions being reduced to a pick-up truck and a 38-foot schooner moored in Camden, Maine. I felt everything in my life up to this point had been a total failure. My attempts at marriage and family life had ended in disaster.*

*This was the period in the late 60s and early 70s when people were reading the Carlos Casteneda books about Don Juan. And there was a resurgent interest in Native American shamanistic practices. I had the feeling that if I could obtain the kind of power that was being talked about in the Casteneda books I could somehow solve all of my problems.*

*I saw Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche as being like Don Juan. So I literally threw myself into the center of Rinpoche's world and to my delight he accepted me. It is said that the chances of finding and being accepted by an enlightened teacher are equal to somebody throwing into the ocean a life buoy and by some happenstance a turtle coming to the surface for air and putting his head through that drifting life buoy. That event would be one's chances of finding such a situation.*

*But in the beginning I was only attracted to the power that I thought Rinpoche would impart to me. I saw enlightenment as a trick of magic—for the benefit of myself and maybe then for others of my choosing. My personal karmic mythology was still very much at work. I was attracted to Rinpoche but bewildered about what was really going on and constantly trying to put it in the framework of my logic and projections. Nevertheless, my fascination and attraction to the weirdness of the situations led me onward.*

*I spent a great deal of time alone with Rinpoche at the first Seminary, which was quite ordinary in some sense. We sat in a room together while he worked. He seemed to be able to work on several projects at the same time. I was touched when he made me a cup of tea. His movements were very deliberate and precise. I was impressed by that. He did not ask me a lot of questions about my personal life. Sometimes he would ask me if I had visited a certain place in England or Scotland. He asked me the year I had been born and, actually, that was about it. I felt a sense of relaxed anticipation in his presence. It seemed to be the courtship phase of a love affair.*

*Chapter 4*

# Turnaround Retreat

Siddha Vyadhalipa is cutting the throats of model birds; Śavaripa shoots an arrow; Kukkuripa pats the bitch's head. Who is Trungpa Rinpoche?

The motorcar stood on the black tarmac road, its rubber feet fat with air bulging into the granite curbstones. The autumn leaves were thick upon the sidewalk, piled like overlapping, dry snake scales crunching under foot. The death of leaves—it was that time of year hated by my mother in her Celtic Wicca gloom for its feeling and smell of a muddy river bottom or the ring around a bathtub. The life had gone out of summer but I was alive, full of joy, expectant, smelling the air of adventure. A journey was commencing to what I understood as the undiscovered country of enlightenment. The car stood there waiting for me, its innards stuffed to the gills with supplies: food, clothing, Buddhist paraphernalia, alcohol, books, pens, paper clips, cooking pots, guns, swords, and pictures. In short, everything we would need—I would need—on my journey.

I was the Chosen One. I was going to become enlightened! Glorious sun. Son of sun. Magnificent. Stupendous. Pregnant

with the hope of spring in the death of summer. I was in love with my teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and he had chosen me to be his attendant for a year of retreat in the western mountains of Massachusetts. Just me and him. Well, almost; there would also be Max, the cook. But everyone knew I was in charge. After all, I was English and Max was Chinese. Look at the facts. What more was there to say? He was a lickspit, the less perfectly formed twin of a double monster. I was already Rinpoche's butler and I had the black coat and pinstriped pants to prove it. Again the hope of enlightenment rose in me like the rising sun. Oblivious to the sadness of the others around me, who were losing their teacher for a year, the Joseph coat fit me like a glove and I was blissful in its multicoloredness.

The plan was simple enough. One of Rinpoche's students, Jean-Claude Van Itallie, had a farmhouse in Charlemont, Massachusetts. I, Rinpoche, Max, and their respective dogs, Ganesh and Myson, would stay on retreat at the farm for about nine or ten months. I was to be Rinpoche's attendant, which meant his secretary, his dresser, his doctor, his nurse, his brother, his driver, his entertainment, his spiritual other, his bodyguard, and essentially his Enkidu or constant companion. Max would cook.

Enlightenment was certain.

I went ahead to organize the farmhouse before Rinpoche's arrival. For two weeks I worked hard cleaning and organizing the farmhouse. The last task was to put away Rinpoche's clothes, which had arrived from Karmê Chöling[10] that very afternoon. I took them up to his bedroom and opened the closet to hang them up. A shower of rice sprayed down upon me. I stood there stunned until it stopped. Then my startled mind grasped the answer. Mice! Mice had stashed rice up in the attic and it had fallen through the closet ceiling when I had opened the door. I turned on the closet light and checked the ceiling for cracks. It was seamless and with-

[10] Formerly Tail of the Tiger, renamed Karmê Chöling; Rinpoche's Buddhist Center in Barnet, Vermont.

out any cracks, so I checked the freshly painted walls. No cracks. I ran my hands over them and tapped them with my knuckle. Nothing. Not even a hairline crack in the plaster. "Someone is playing a trick on me," I thought. "Perhaps a plastic bag full of rice was taped to the ceiling so that when I opened the door rice fell out on me." I checked the door, the floor, the walls, the ceiling. I ran up to the attic. Nothing. No bag, no tape, no string, nothing. My mind began to panic. Better have a cup of tea.

I went down to the kitchen and asked myself if I was alone in the house. I made the tea, drank it, and then ran back up to the bedroom closet to double-check every theory I could think of. There was nothing. Nothing! There was just the rice on the floor. About two cupfuls. I listened. Maybe someone was hiding in the house. I checked every room. It was getting dark outside. I had only one more night alone. Rinpoche and Max would be driving down from Karmê Chöling the next day.

Calling up my Coldstream Guard's[11] mind, I had a glass of sake and marched bravely up to the bedroom, cleaned up the rice, and finally put away Rinpoche's clothes. I returned to the kitchen to make myself a bowl of soup and sat at the table eating it. The house started to move. It creaked and groaned in the wind. Then it whistled and moaned. I ran up to my room and took out my thirty-eight caliber revolver from the bedside table. Hurriedly I loaded it and stuck it in my belt. Since I had recently become a Buddhist I also picked up my mala beads from the small shrine table and hung them around my neck for good luck. I had more faith in my revolver at the time, however.

Going downstairs to the living room I put a record on the phonograph, a recording of the trooping of the colour from the Queen's Guard. The sergeant major shouted out orders. The troops stamped to attention. The massed bands burst into military marches. I drank sake and waited steadfast in line for the demons of the unknown to attack. I turned on every light in the

---

[11] British military regiment

house and burned incense. The music, smell, and light drowned out the moaning, moving house and its unseen world. I stood guard all night waiting for Rinpoche to come with the rising sun. When Rinpoche arrived with Max and the two dogs I could finally relax.

For the first few weeks Max and I organized our daily routine. We had breakfast at 8 a.m., lunch at noon, and supper around 7 p.m. But gradually Rinpoche started to stay up later into the evening and then get up later during the day. At first Max and I took turns staying up with him, but he insisted that we both stay awake with him. We all sat around in the same small sitting room, sometimes listening to the recording of "The Trooping of the Colour" over and over again, other times in silence. Our bed-time got later and later—1 a.m., 2 a.m., 3, 4, 5, 6 a.m. We were staying up all night and going to bed at dawn or later. The prob-lem was that with this schedule neither Max nor I could do any shopping, as the stores would be closed before we got out of bed at 7 p.m. I explained this to Rinpoche, hoping he would allow me to go to bed early so I could shop in the morning. I was dearly hoping I would be sent to town for the shopping and then have an opportunity to find some other entertainment. Instead he said, "Okay, we'll send Max," condemning me to perpetual, time-less, inactive Colour Trooping.

During one of our long nights I brought up the mystery of the rice in the closet. He said, "Think of it as gap." What the hell was that supposed to mean? Gap? How could one think of some-thing as gap? There was no thing in a gap. A gap was empty. I started to panic again and I asked Max about it.

"Oh," said Max, "It must have been a blessing."

"You know," he went on, "rice falling on your head is a bless-ing." I liked the explanation better than "gap." Nevertheless the idea of gap remained a small, glowing panic ember in my mind—the fear of nothingness.

During one of my sleeping times, which had an equal chance of being night or day, I had a dream about the house being

attacked by demons of all kinds. I told Rinpoche about this dream.

"Oh," he said. "Why don't you sleep with your gun in your hand next time and you can shoot them."

I thought that this was a good idea. So the next afternoon when I went to bed, I loaded my .38-caliber pistol and lay down to sleep with it clenched in my fist. As I lay drifting off it suddenly occurred to me that I might wake up and accidentally shoot someone, so I took the bullets out and went to sleep with the unloaded gun in my hand. Needless to say, the demons showed up in my dream, and although I had the gun in my hand I could not find the bullets for it. In the dream the demons chased me all over the house while I desperately searched for the bullets. Rinpoche laughed for a long time after I recounted the dream to him.

The autumn days slipped by in our numbing routine, so it was some relief when Rinpoche announced that we would have some visitors. Three other students, Duncan, Jane, and Nick, would be visiting for a long weekend. Nick showed up with some LSD and we decided to take a "trip" with Rinpoche. I had never taken acid before, so I was both excited and nervous about the prospect. Max organized the food, as tripping could make you very hungry. He put a pot roast in a slow cooker that would be ready about six in the morning, although I had my doubts that I would be that hungry at daybreak. The six of us sat in the living room and Nick passed around the acid on a small piece of white cardboard. It looked like fish scales. We all took one hit. Rinpoche took what was left, about six fish scales. I drank some sake and we all chatted.

I was a bit disappointed as nothing much was happening and I went upstairs to the bathroom to sit on the toilet. Bending forward, I looked down at my feet. They melted into the floor like running jelly. Somewhat surprised, I looked at the walls. They were running with blood! I pulled up my pants and ran down the

disappearing stairs and threw myself on the couch. My startled eyes were wide open and my teeth were grinding. "Are you okay, Johnny?" Rinpoche asked gently.

I was pissed off and totally paranoid. *Why the hell was he asking me that? Was he into some kind of Asian mind training? Perhaps he was an outer-space alien.*

Looking across at him I hissed resentfully, "Yes, I'm fine."

"Let's play 'Trooping of the Colour Guard,'" he said.

*What was the space alien saying now,* I said to myself, *"Trooping of the Colour Guard." What the fuck is that?*

Somehow I went over to the phonograph and put on the record and sat back on the couch. Something shouted, "By the left, quick march," and a band struck up with British Grenadiers. I looked across the room at a big Chinese doll that occasionally melted into Max, who was smiling like an idiot. Duncan next to me had his head in his hands, so I went back to grinding my teeth and staring into nothingness. From a long way off I heard Rinpoche's voice. "Johnny, speak to Duncan."

*What was a Duncan—a dung can?* I started to laugh. *Duncan was full of shit.*

There was Rinpoche again. "Johnny, speak to Duncan."

I turned my head and looked at Duncan. His head was still in his hands.

"You okay?" I grunted. Nothing. "Hey, how you doing?" I nudged him with my elbow. He moaned and sat back with his head on the couch, staring at the ceiling.

Rinpoche pushed a newspaper into my hands.

"Read to him," he said.

I managed to stop the letters from floating all over the page long enough to read to Duncan. There was a picture of an old sailing ship and I read out loud from the column about "Old Ironsides," the *Constitution.* During the upcoming 1976 Bicentennial celebration she was to be sailed into Boston Harbor where she would be turned around and sailed out again.

"That's it," shouted Rinpoche. "I want you to tell Duncan a story and the punch line will be 'the Great Turnaround.'"

I started slowly, with the first story being about the Three Bears. Duncan listened, laughing at the story. Then I hit him with, "Then Goldilocks did the Great Turnaround."

"Oh shit," he moaned. Something clicked. I had a mission. I was relentless. I attached myself to Duncan's mind and punched out story after story with the finale "The Great Turnaround."

Duncan said, "Wow!" "Holy smoke!" "Fuck!" every time I hit him with the phrase that he had let himself be lured into. Cunningly I hunted him each time and led him into my trap of the Great Turnaround which I shouted out at the end of each presentation of images. We must have gone on for hours because the darkness outside began to turn into gray dawn.

Rinpoche motioned me to sit across the room by the window, opposite Duncan on the couch. Rinpoche started to ask people questions about their lives, prompting them on into an open display of their aspects. I was fascinated. It was like watching a group of actors putting on a self-stylized interactive play. Rinpoche, who had not asked me anything, looked across at me.

"Is it always like this?" I asked.

"Always," he answered, and he went back to playing with the play. Finally he said, "Let's eat."

I was famished. We dug into the pot roast with great relish. Duncan said to me, "Thanks for helping me. I was really stuck."

I laughed, because I thought I was the one who was stuck and Rinpoche had helped me out of it by having me interact with Duncan.

As the sun rose in the blue emptiness I helped Rinpoche up the narrow stairs to the bedroom. We played the falling-down-the-stairs game. The object of this game was for him to crush me beneath his weight by falling on top of me—the greater the height of the fall, the better. As I rolled him into bed he was still giggling.

I had decided to make a sacred object out of Rinpoche. In order to do that I would be very formal in a British way. Now Max, who was more laid-back, California-style, would greet Rinpoche in the morning by saying, "Hi, Rinpoche, I suppose you want breakfast." Max would not even get up out of his chair, but would continue to read the newspaper. This pissed the hell out of me. The more formally British I got, the more relaxed Max seemed to get.

This got to the point where I really wanted to throttle Max for not behaving correctly as I thought he should, and I told Rinpoche I was ready to knock some sense into him.

"Well, we can't do that," he said. "Let's play some tricks on him."

Max was a speed freak whenever he got up, whether it was morning or evening. He would throw on his kimono and jump into his slippers, which he kept outside his bedroom door. He would just slide his feet into the slippers and take off down the hall. One night Rinpoche sent the grateful Max off to bed early.

"You look tired, Max; better go to bed," he said.

We waited about an hour or two and then we went upstairs and securely glued Max's slippers to the floor. Rinpoche was rolling around stifling his laughter. The next morning we were up before Max, sitting in the kitchen having tea. The kitchen was right under Max's room. We heard him get up, rush out his door, and then, bang! He hit hard on the upstairs floor. Down he came to the kitchen.

"Say, Rinpoche," he exclaimed, "someone glued my slippers to the floor." I burst out laughing.

Rinpoche looked at him and said, "Perhaps it was an illusion." Then he started to chuckle.

The following week was passing in an unusually quiet and peaceful manner when Rinpoche said to me, "Johnny, can you put something that will smell in Max's room."

"You mean like scent, Sir?" I asked, not really understanding his intent.

"No, no," he looked at me like I was crazy. "Something that will stink."

We were eating fish, so I said, "Well, Sir, I could nail a piece of fish up under his bed."

"Great," he said, nodding his head.

So I put a large piece of halibut into a net bag and nailed it to the underside of Max's bed. When I opened my bedroom door the next morning the entire hallway smelled like Fulton's fish market. Max said nothing and both Rinpoche and I were quite surprised. We thought that he must have twigged it but the next day the whole house smelled of rotten fish. Max came downstairs and said, "John, I think there is a dead mouse in the wall in my room. Could you take a look? I'm going to move to another room."

That same day, believe it or not, I found a dead mouse on the lawn. As Max was moving over to the new room I went upstairs and chipped away at part of the wall and pretended to find the dead mouse.

"Here it is, Max, you were right." I showed him the dead mouse.

After Max moved everything into his new room, I nailed the dead fish to the bottom of his new bed. When Max complained about the smell again, Rinpoche said, "Your smell must be following you around."

I had always been a hunter. It was part of my self-sufficient trip of taking care of myself in the wilderness—not just of the forest but of the world. Now that I was a Buddhist I reacted in horror to killing, although playing with guns for purely self-defense was something I was sure that the Buddha would have agreed with. In any case, hunting seemed more humane than a slaughterhouse.

When I was a young farmhand I had never been to a state-registered slaughterhouse. I had no more idea of the procedure than did the black-and-white cow we were taking there. The inside was stainless steel and white tile with a cement floor. An electric hoist with a hook on it ran down the center of the room.

The place reeked of Pine-Sol. The smell made the atmosphere even more surrealistic. We had to coerce the cow into the room by twisting her tail. She was wide-eyed with terror. One of the fellows attached chain cuffs to her rear legs and ran the chain up the hook on the electric hoist. He pressed the red button on the wall and the hoist slowly gathered in the chain and lifted the animal. The cow's body hung in the air only inches above the floor. A pair of pliers attached to a rope was put into the cow's flaring nostrils. I was told to pull the rope so that the cow's neck was stretched tight. The other fellow took a large butcher's knife and with a swift swing he struck the cow's stretched neck. The cow's blood burst out across the room with great force. I was so shocked I let go of the rope. The head of the cow was only half severed. The cow, swinging slightly, convulsed while it hung suspended in the center of the room. Blood spewed out of her severed neck in all directions. Her mouth opened and closed in silent bellows as air rushed in and out of her exposed windpipe.

One of the fellows, enjoying my shock, took a cup and filled it with blood from the cow's streaming jugular vein. He offered the steaming cup to me. "Want some? It puts lead in your pencil." Now, thoroughly amused by my repulsion, he laughed loudly and drank the hot blood, leaving red stains on his lips. Within an hour the cow was skinned, disemboweled, cut into sections, and hung in the cooler. I decided I liked hunting—it was more romantic.

In order to be a successful hunter you had to first understand and appreciate the hunted animal. You had to know its lifestyle, its nature, its habitat. You had to actually enter its world. You had to realize that like yourself, an animal and its world are alive, and that life and death, being alive, have a quality of magic—a sacredness.

I had a holy concept of sacredness, regarding some things as holy and others as untouchable. My shrine in my Buddhist practice was like something out of *House & Garden* magazine—flowers, candles and incense, and beautiful Tibetan pictures. I was on my way to becoming a real holy man.

Rinpoche could see my progress in practicing Buddhism and he started to bother me about hunting. He wanted me to take him hunting. "I want to kill something," he said. "I have never killed anything. I've just been a Buddhist monk all my life."

I would always refuse. "It would not be right for you to kill something, Sir."

Seeing Rinpoche in a slaughterhouse or even hunting didn't seem right to me. It didn't fit my concept of a holy man. The hunting queries continued for some time until one morning a flock of snowbirds gathered on the frozen lawn where I had thrown some old bread. Rinpoche picked up the .22 rifle from the kitchen corner. He walked toward the window and said, "Right, Johnny? We're going to shoot some birds."

I protested. "Sir, we've been through this a million times. Please hand me back the gun."

Rinpoche, always one to enjoy himself, began to leap around the room in his kimono singing, "I'm going to kill. I'm going to kill." I didn't like the way it sounded at all. I took the gun from him and loaded it. But I also moved the rear sight out of line. I opened the kitchen window.

"Here you are, Sir," I said as I handed the gun to Rinpoche. "It's all ready to fire."

Rinpoche took aim at the birds and fired the single-shot rifle into the morning air. The birds flew off and not one was left dead. I threw more bread out and Rinpoche fired and again no birds were killed. We both laughed. I wasn't surprised, as he probably couldn't have hit the barn with those readjusted sights.

Rinpoche looked directly at me and said, "Oh, you're just an English gentleman, you couldn't kill a bird either." It was a challenge and I took the bait.

"Oh?" I said, accepting the wager.

So I took the gun and aimed, using only the front sights on the rifle and picturing the rear sights in my mind. I killed a bird, much to my own delight and Rinpoche's surprise. I walked out, picked up the bird's carcass, and waved it to Rinpoche and Max.

As I helped Rinpoche up the stairs to bed that night he said, "Johnny, do you know what killing that bird means?"

"No, Sir." I said.

"It means you will get married and your first child will be a boy who will be a *tülku.*[12] Also it will cause a slight interruption in our living situation."

I was dumbfounded. I had no idea what relationship there was between the events of that morning and my having a son. Rinpoche didn't expand on it, so I let it go and silently put him to bed.

Two days later Rinpoche and Max were in town shopping and got stuck in a heavy snowstorm. They had to stay overnight at an inn. Rinpoche called and told me with a chuckle, "We've been held up by a snowbird." A slight interruption. Interestingly, I have not killed anything since. Later I did get married and our first child was a daughter whom we called Sophie. Rinpoche announced that she was a reincarnation of G. I. Gurdjieff.

"But Gurdjieff was a man," I said.

"Yes," said Rinpoche, "that's Gurdjieff's joke on us."

Somehow during this winter of the retreat year my handle on what I thought of as reality was becoming a little insecure. Out of seemingly nowhere I started having panic attacks, rapid heartbeat, and hyperventilation. I was sure I was going to die on the spot and I was certain there was a ghost following me around the house. So I asked Rinpoche if he had seen any ghosts in the house.

"Only two," he replied.

I almost fainted.

One night I had a dream of talking to a woman in her late thirties. She was wearing a long dress and holding my outstretched hand. She was talking about building the farmhouse where we were staying. "When were you born?" I asked.

"May, 1853," she said.

---

[12] Tulku—In Tibetan Buddhism, a person who is recognized as a reincarnation of a previously deceased teacher.

I did the math in my dreaming mind, pulled my hand away and sat up in the bed, awake, with my heart racing.

When I was physically with Rinpoche I did not have panic attacks but I was certain that he was somehow the cause of it all. It did not occur to me that Buddha's message, "Nothing whatsoever should be clung to," applied to me. My Britishness was part of "me." I had made my living by being British and if I gave that up what would I become? American, French, Italian? I mean, you can't just become nothing. But the fear was growing in me that Rinpoche was somehow nothing—a gap. How could "I" act as nothing? Where do you start? After all, the Path of Accumulation was the Path of Accumulating, not the Path of Nothingness. The Path of Accumulation meant that I was going to get something. Here I was being invited to jump into empty nothingness. Not even invited, I was being pushed—caught between a rock and a hard place. My memories of war became a welcome and safe distraction. I felt that if I could keep these away from Rinpoche I could hang on to some semblance of sanity. Every time the world would start melting around him I would take refuge in the only thing left in my thinking mind, my memories.

Rinpoche said he would like to target shoot. I had my .38 revolver, which I had purchased to protect Rinpoche (some joke), and a .22-caliber single-shot rifle. Now I went out and purchased a Rugar .223-caliber semiautomatic with a thirty-round clip. I set up a target area in the garden that resembled World War II in miniature, with plastic soldiers, tanks, and trucks. Rinpoche, Max, and I would go out and blast them. Rinpoche called them the Mara Army. "You could be victorious over the troops of Mara, Johnny," he said. That sounded good but what the hell did it mean? I looked up Mara in the encyclopedia and it said "Mara is the Lord of the Sixth Heaven of the Desire Realm and is often depicted with a hundred arms and riding on an elephant."

Oh, I thought, mythology. I felt better. It's not real. But just in case, I started to look for an elephant rifle. Perhaps a Winchester .375 H and H Magnum might do the trick.

One evening Rinpoche and I were sitting in the kitchen. Max rushed in from shopping in town. Now, the closet and basement doors were next to each other and both doors looked the same. The basement stairs were very steep and ran down about twelve feet. Max was distractedly talking to us as he took off his coat, opened the wrong door, and, not looking, reached in to hang it up. Rinpoche yelled, "Shunyata,"[13] as Max and his coat fell into the basement. Unhurt except for a few scrapes, Max climbed out.

"Rinpoche," said Max, "You should have yelled to stop me."

"Why?" replied Rinpoche. "You could have gotten enlightened."

That night we went out to dinner at the local inn. Rinpoche had me purchase some cigars and secretly put some gunpowder in one of them for Max. The three of us sat in the inn casually smoking our stogies, two of us waiting in anticipation for the other one to explode. This went on for some time until Max, with the cigar still in his mouth, took a big puff and the cigar let out a big whoosh rather than an explosion. Flaming sparks and smoke shot out across the room from the cigar. Max remained pretty cool and said, "Your idea, I expect, Rinpoche." The three of us laughed.

However, the truth was that Max was a nervous wreck, and beneath my dignified British façade so was I. Finally, Max asked Rinpoche if he could go back to Boulder for a few weeks. Rinpoche gave his okay and Max departed, leaving Rinpoche and me alone in a house surrounded by deep snow. By necessity Max left his dog, Myson, with us. One night after supper Rinpoche said, "Get Myson and bring him in here." I dragged the shaking dog into the kitchen and following Rinpoche's instructions I sat him on the floor and covered his eyes with a blindfold. I set up stands with lighted candles by either side of his

---

13 Shunyata—Sanskrit meaning emptiness or void; the negation of believing in the false idea of how things exist. This cannot be explained verbally, but can be experienced.

head. Myson couldn't move his head without being burned. Rinpoche took a potato and hit Myson on the head with it. When the dog moved, the fur on his ear would catch on fire. I put out the flames. Now and then Rinpoche would scrape his chair across the tiled floor and whack him again on the head with a potato.

"Sir," I began hesitantly, trying to stop him.

"Shut up," snapped Rinpoche, "and hand me another potato."

I started to empathize with the dog. In fact, I became the dog. I was blindfolded and was banged on the head with a spud and if I turned my head my ears would burn and there was the squealing sound of the chair on the floor. Pissing in my pants I was that dog not being able to move, feeling terrified and at the same time excited. Finally, the scraping chair and the potato throwing stopped and we released the shaking dog, who ran upstairs to Max's empty room.

"That's how you train students," Rinpoche calmly stated to me.

"Jesus," I thought, "that's pretty barbaric."

Rinpoche had me change the telephone number so that Max could not call us before he came back. He arrived, bags in hand, concerned that he had not been able to reach us. Before he could say much else Myson rushed in and jumped all over him in exuberant delight. Rinpoche deliberately scraped the kitchen chair across the tiled floor. The terrified dog shot out of the house and fled across the field. Max was shocked and pointedly asked, "Rinpoche, what did you do to my dog?"

"I don't see any dog," he replied, looking at me.

"I got it!" I said, with the realization of being blindfolded and having three things happen to you at once, knowing the scraping and the disappearance of the dog were both somehow illusion. In fact, it was all illusion. Everything was illusion, but real. Rinpoche smiled and warmly greeted Max.

Did I get it? Not then.

It was during this retreat in Massachusetts that Rinpoche started envisioning and developing the Kingdom of Shambhala.[14] The Kalapa Court would be Rinpoche's home and it was to be in my charge. Instead of being Rinpoche's butler I would soon be Master of the House. I would become a Dapön in charge of the Court Kusung, or servant guards—in Buddhist terms, Bodhisattva Guardians. Molly, one of Rinpoche's students, came down from Karmê Chöling. She was an illustration artist and she and Rinpoche together designed the Shambhala flag—a white ground with blue, red, white, and orange stripes on the leading edge and the yellow sun in the white field. Rinpoche designed and drew the Shambhala arms of the tiger, lion, garuda, and dragon, which are seen on the cover of *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (published by Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1984.)

I was excited about this creative time. This was going to be a real kingdom with its location in Nova Scotia, Canada. I would be safe within that reality, or so I thought. One day Rinpoche said to me, "Well, you know, Johnny, someone has to ask me."

"Ask you what?" I said.

"Ask me to become Earth Holder, the Monarch of Shambhala."

"Well, I'll ask you," I replied.

"Great!" said Rinpoche. We planned the event for the Tibetan New Year. I cut a tree for a flagpole and Max planned a dinner. Then at sunrise on the New Year the three of us got up and dressed in our best attire. As the sun rose in the eastern sky I asked Rinpoche formally if he would become Sakyong[15] for the benefit of all beings.

He replied, "Yes."

---

14 Shambhala: Sanskrit; a mythical kingdom somewhat like Brigadoon or Camelot; considered by some to be located in northeast India. It is the place where Kalachakra teachings originated, and is the kingdom from which a savior is predicted to arise when the world is on the brink of destruction.

15 *Sakyong*—Earth Holder, the monarch of Shambhala, head of the Shambhala lineage.

I fired off a twenty-one shot salute from my pistol and Max ran the Shambhala flag up the pole. We saluted and shouted "Hip, hip, hurray!" then followed up by singing the Shambhala anthem. Max and I went into the dining room and feasted with the new Sakyong. I was joyful and excited but underneath, my uneasiness continued to alternately swell and subside. Somehow the reality of the "gap" was still lurking below my world of this-and-that. On an intellectual level that was still fairly primitive I had some understanding of Buddhism. I knew what it was supposed to look like—peaceful, calm, wise, compassionate. I knew enough to say, "Yes, I got it," but at the same time it was not in my gut on a visceral level. I thought perhaps I should do a retreat, since it would give me a chance to get away, relax, and get myself together before things went too far.

I could see myself robed, sitting under a pine tree in meditation posture with the sunlight playing on my shoulders and the wind in the pines. "Yes, that's it," I concluded, so I asked Rinpoche.

"Not a chance," he growled.

"But, Sir, I could finish my prostrations and do the other practices . . . take the Vajrayogini abhisheka[16] with David and the Regent and . . . "

"No hope of that," he snapped.

Shit. I was trapped again, stuck in the life of a servant bursting with resentment. Then he gave me one of those smiles that light up the whole dark universe. It penetrated into my murk and dissolved it and I was better and worse simultaneously.

"One day you will be Sir John Perks," he said.

Wow, I thought. Sir John Perks of the Kingdom of Shambhala. I was full of hope again.

---

[16] Vajrayogini—the diamond yogini. A meditative practice deity; the nature of one's basic being, or state of mind.

Abhisheka, Sanskrit for anointment; a ceremony in which the Vajra master empowers the student into the meditative practice of a particular deity. The energy of the deity is manifested during the ceremony, and there is a joining of the minds of the teacher and the student, which arises because of the student's intense devotion.

Aloneness, when it hit, ruined my hopes and expectations. I was walking to the car in Greenfield, having done the shopping, when it struck. I was suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of total aloneness and stopped dead in my tracks. There was no John Perks. There was nothing to be alone. Had "nothing" been a mental concept, it would have been something to hold onto. Then I panicked.

Only now, looking back, can I say that it was an overwhelming realization of nonexistence. The only way that I can convey what the experience was like is to ask the reader to imagine that all you think you are is totally fabricated. What you are is totally manipulated and conditioned by your own mind. Had I completely realized this at the time I would have died on the spot from a heart attack. For what was under assault was my thinking mind, its solid reality, what and who I thought I was. That which I thought was reality was, in fact, totally empty. This was the great "switcheroo," or turnaround.

Desperately trying to get back to what I still thought was my solidity I staggered to the car, trying not to hyperventilate. I managed to drive to the Howard Johnson's Motel bar. I ordered a double gin and tonic and drank it down like a glass of water.

"Are you okay?" asked the bartender. Where had I heard that phrase before?

"Fine, fine," I said and ordered another double. Sir John Perks had better get a suit of armor, I thought wryly.

But the attacks became more frequent. Then I had a realization. Sex! If I felt so alone why not have a partner? I asked Rinpoche if I could have a lady friend up on some weekends. To my surprise he said yes. So I invited a friend from Boston to visit. But it gave me no relief. In fact, it made the aloneness sharper and I felt as if I were going to die any second. One day at breakfast Rinpoche said to me, "Johnny, isn't it strange how orgasm and death feel the same?"

I blocked his words for the moment and panicked later.

Relief came several days later when he said, "Johnny, let's take a trip to London."

I pretended not to be excited, and to make sure, I asked, "To London, England, Sir?"

"Yes," he answered matter-of-factly. "We need to get some Shambhala medals made there and we could get some military uniforms." I brightened up. Trooping of the Colors meets Sir John Perks. I had a mission.

"Let's stay at the Winston Churchill Hotel," he suggested.

National pride swelled in my chest. Shambhala was going to be British after all. As a safety procedure I went to the local doctor and got prescriptions of Librium and Tagamet for my panic and stomach pain. Sam, the publisher of Shambhala Publications, was to meet us in London where he had an office. On the aircraft Rinpoche and I sat together. He was quite upbeat and talked about all the things we would do in London: restaurants, nightclubs, theater, and clothing stores. The air stewardess asked what we would like to drink. Rinpoche ordered his usual. "Ginandtonicus," pronounced as the name of the Roman general from the Asterisk Comic Books.

"You could teach people etiquette, Johnny," said Rinpoche. He went on talking about military uniforms, tuxedos, evening dress, balls, dancing, and formal dinners. Excitedly I joined in with further ideas. Rinpoche said, "Yes! Yes! Yes! Let's do it. We will grow old together." Bliss and joy returned, drowning out the emptiness.

And so it came to pass. In London we stayed at the Winston Churchill. We took the designs of the Shambhala medals to the jewelers to be made. We ordered uniforms at Grieves and Hawks on Savile Row—a general's uniform for Rinpoche, a major's uniform for me. Rinpoche used his family name on the order form, Mr. C. T. Mukpo. I used my original birth name, John Andrews. The clerk looked at Rinpoche's form in a quizzical way and asked, "Who is Mr. C. T. Mukpo?"

I hesitated, my mind searching for a realistic answer. Finally I said the first true thing I had ever said in my life.

"I have absolutely no idea."

*Chapter 4*

# Commentary

*I felt my luck was turning. I believed that because I was willing to do anything to be close to Rinpoche—especially the things that other people didn't want to do, like washing dishes, cleaning house, and ironing clothes—I had somehow tricked Rinpoche into taking me on the retreat so that he could instruct me in how to become an enlightened siddha.*[17] *It did not occur to me until years later that he was the one who had tricked me by going along with my whole trip. This was also the beginning of seemingly unrelated events that began to undermine my habitual patterns of operating.*

*It's interesting that Rinpoche was willing to go through my whole gun attachment with me even to the extent of making me his bodyguard. It was the beginning of his helping me create my ultimate fantasy world, with occasional hints that there might be other realities. These other realities had the effect on me of creating extreme anxiety and panic.*

*My mind could not grasp even intellectually the idea of impermanence or the idea of groundlessness. That challenged the idea of*

[17] Siddha—One who has attained success in his practice thereby gaining magical power.

*"I" being a solid entity. I was afraid of things I couldn't see and did not understand. And I was terrified of ghosts. Having experienced them in my early childhood they brought terror and panic. Rinpoche had the ability to make seemingly unimportant comments at the exact moment that they became magnified in my mind. It was his timing that terrified me. He seemed to be able to read my mind before the thoughts had been formulated. I began to have the uneasy feeling that I did not know what kind of being he was. And that meant that all my manipulated power over him to whatever end was useless. This brought up the interesting dilemma of how I was going to get what I wanted.*

*The acid trip where Rinpoche focused my mind by working with Duncan and the "great turnaround" was my first realization of looking at phenomena as they really are, without logical, intellectual, or other mental projections. Needless to say, that state didn't last very long—a matter of hours; then I was thrown back to my ordinary mode of operation very quickly. My aggression in wanting to confront Max Rinpoche turned into playing tricks, so he introduced to my mind an alternative way of dealing with the situation which was more creative and playful. One might call it my early introduction to crazy wisdom, where one uses the energy as it arises then joins with it and presents reality. People say "Be here now." But for someone lost in illusions this makes no sense unless it can be shown in actual, ordinary, on-the-spot situations. That's what the crazy wisdom teacher does continually. Sometimes the student gets it and sometimes he doesn't. Most of the time, I didn't. But much later there was some realization.*

*The episode with Myson, the dog, blindfolded sitting on the floor, reflected my basic state. The candles on either side of his head related to aspects of bad and good, or samsara and nirvana. The potato as a represention of the phenomenal world whacking one on the head was initiated by the guru. If one turns one's head one way or the other, one's ears catch on fire. At this point one is still blind. Reacting to the fear and pain by trying to escape, one is overpowered by even more emotional traumas. The conditioning aspect of scraping the chair across*

*the floor formulates how one will react, thus perpetuating how we perceive the world. When the chair is scraped later on, in our confused state of mind we run because we are reminded of our basic pain. The sound of the chair is basic emptiness—a state that we are most terrified of—so we run.*

*The idea of my own death was extremely terrifying to me. It meant not only the termination of my bodily pleasures and delights but also the termination of what I had built up as the image of John Perks. The end of all of that created extreme anxiety, and somewhere within the deep recesses of my mind I panicked as my I-ness began slipping away. I would have run away, but I was in love with Rinpoche and he kept offering me new opportunities related to my fantasies to explore and feel safe in—which of course he ultimately undermined. Although my devotion was somewhat primitive, it was there to stay forever.*

*Although I did not realize it at the time there seemed to be connections between the killing of the bird at the retreat and Siddha Vyādhalipa; between the hunting Mahāsiddha Śavaripa; and between the action with the dog and Mahāsiddha Kukkuripa. Later, while practicing the Sadhana of Vajrayogini and meditating on the actions of my guru while in retreat, I found my connection to these three Siddhas to be one of remarkable coincidence, in that I was able to take instruction from other beings such as birds, fishes, and dogs. And as examples, the compassionate lives of these Siddhas are always of great inspiration to me.*

*The following are condensed outlines of stories of these Siddhas from* Masters of Mahāmudrā *by Keith Dowman:*[18]

> *Siddha Vyādhalipa was a bird-catcher. "His remarkable sādhana consisted of first sharpening his concentration into sāmadhi*[19] *by contemplating cutting the throats of model birds,*

[18] Reprinted by permission from *Masters of Mahamudra: Songs and Histories of the Eighty-Four Buddhist Siddhas* by Keith Dowman, the State University of New York Press © 1985, State Univeristy of New York. All rights reserved.

[19] Sāmadhi — meditative state of total absorption; mind is experienced free from distraction.

*and then traveling the villages killing birds in order to provoke compassion and* ahimsa *(non-violence) in his audience before restoring the creatures to life. Such action is called 'wise penitential activity' . . . and the paradoxical, apparently crazy skillful means of the yogin with mahāmudrā[20]-siddhi.*

*The Mahāsiddha Śavaripa was a hunter. As a hunter, "he kills to survive and survives to kill." He was a member of the Śabara tribe. "Śabaras were a wild, aboriginal, outcast, hunting and gathering tribe from the Vindhya Hills. Śabaras were also 'corpse-workers' in Bengal" . . . and therefore considered as untouchables. On a hunting trip, Śavaripa ran into Lokeśvara, an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, where he is shown the continual cycle of karma of his actions. Realizing his perpetual entrapment, "Lokeśvara gave him a fulltime Sādhana to practice . . . and for twelve years Śavaripa meditated upon undirected and unstructured sublime compassion in a thought-free state and he attained the supreme realization of Mahāmudrā, whereupon he sang:*

*In the forest of unknowing there lurks a deer,*
*The deer called Alienation;*
*Drawing back the great bow of means and insight,*
*Letting fly the single arrow of ultimate truth,*
*The deer dies—yes, thought dies!*
*Then the flesh is a feast of non-duality,*
*The flavor is a taste of pure pleasure,*
*And the goal, The Magnificent Stance, is accomplished."*

*The Mahāsiddha Kukkuripa was a wandering yogin practicing and begging for his food. He discovered a starving dog. He took her to his cave and fed her. "After twelve years of continuous practice of mantra he attained magical powers—prescience and divine insight—and the gods of the Thirty-three Sensual Heavens invited him to their paradise. He accepted their invitation, and*

[20] Mahāmudrā — "Great Seal" — the realization of emptiness which affects all experience.

*set out on a ceaseless round of self-indulgent feasting and pleasure provided by the gods.*

*Meanwhile, the dog fended for herself in the cave, rooting around for whatever she could find to sustain life. But she was not forgotten. Even while the yogin feasted on the gods' offerings, he told them of his dog, saying that he must return to guard her."*

*The gods said, "'Don't be so foolish! Please remain with us here.' This kind of divine remark persuaded the yogin to postpone his return, but eventually his love for the dog won, and he returned to her.*

*He found her in the cave where he had left her, and he patted her on the head in greeting. At that moment the dog became a Dākinī, and the Dākinī spoke to him like this:*

*Well done! Well done! You have proved your worth.*
*You have overcome temptation,*
*Returning to receive supreme power.*
*The mundane power of the gods is delusory*
*For they retain a notion of self,*
*And fallible pleasure is not so great.*
*Now your Dākinī will grant you supreme realization,*
*The immaculate pure pleasure that has no outflow.*

*Then she showed him the symbolic union of skillful means and perfect insight, and after an irreversible, infallible vision of immutability had arisen in his mind-stream, he attained supreme realization."*

*Chapter 5*

# Dreaming My Reinvention Away

## Who made up your past, present, and future?

Spring came to the Massachusetts hill country with rain, mud, and peeping frogs. On one of our walks by the farm pond Rinpoche noticed the frog spawn jelly in the water. I explained how we could put it into an aquarium and watch them change into tadpoles. He seemed excited about that and helped me set up the aquarium next to his bed so we could watch the transformation every day. When Rinpoche awakened every morning we would peer into the aquarium and Rinpoche would exclaim, "Breaking out of the egg!" On the way to the bathroom he went, singing, "Breaking out, breaking out of the eggs."

Our bathroom routine was always the same. I would prearrange the two kinds of soap, the shampoo, the towels, the toothpaste, toothbrushes, and the hairbrushes. I would follow Rinpoche into the bathroom and help him take off his kimono, which I hung on the door. Then he would peer into the mirror making faces and singing songs. This time it was the egg hatching song. I looked at my own image in the mirror and then over to his. I started to panic as I realized his image was not in the

mirror. For a second I stopped. Then, there it was, smiling and making faces. I was puzzled but I did not say anything, as I thought it was my faulty perception. As this began to happen more often, I felt that somehow he was playing a trick on me, so I paid extreme attention in the morning to the mirror antics. Nothing happened for several weeks, everything was quite normal, and I concluded that it had all been my hallucination. Then, when I was not expecting anything, he disappeared from the mirror again.

"How do you do that?" I asked him on the spot.

He chuckled and said, "You just do it."

While he was in the shower I handed him the soap and continued, "Is the trick with the mirror or my mind?"

"Both," he said, washing soap out of his hair. I was struck dumb. My reality was being stretched thin.

"You have a good heart, Johnny." Rinpoche's face is right in my face. His eyes are big and luminous, like two planets in space. "You have a good heart, Johnny," he says again. He smiles and the warmth of the sun washes over me penetrating throughout my body. Somehow I know I am dreaming, but I can't wake up. "You have a good heart, Johnny."

"But, Sir," I protest, "my ancestors were thieves, murderers, rapists, plunderers, enslavers, liars, hedonists, deceivers, destroyers, and I'm just a ghost." The pain of looking is horrendous. It's like a golden spear thrust into my heart.

I fall into the Thames and I am unable to swim. I touch the black mud in the river bottom, the sound of rushing water is in my ears. I enter midnight blue, vast and empty. The next thing I remember, I am sitting on the bank in the sunlight, my clothes muddy and soaked with water. I look around for my savior. There is nobody in sight. I must be a ghost, I think. Will I ever be human again? A living ghost, asleep, unable to wake up.

My mother does abortions. One young girl leaves a baby on the doorstep. It is small and delicate like a white porcelain doll. It has been carefully washed and wrapped in a white lace tablecloth. Its eyes are closed. Mother heats up the coal stove in the

kitchen until it glows red hot. Picking up the dead child by the head, she drops it into the open flame and quickly replaces the metal round lid. In a few seconds the baby's head shoots out of the stove with the iron ring as a hat. Looking like a demon it discharges flames out of its eyes and mouth before descending, disintegrating in the heat. It is unnamed. No hands mourn the ashes.

Winnie comes for an abortion in a fur coat. She is always drunk. She stumbles against me, her whiskey breath enters my lungs. She vomits on the floor and my mother cleans it up. I wash down her coat.

"You have to go over to Winnie's house and clean it up. While you are there, go up to the bedroom and under the bed you will find cooking pots filled with money. Take some."

She thrusts Winnie's house keys into my hand. I take the train to Winnie's house, a few stops on the loop line. I open the front door and proceed up the stairs to the bedroom, but there is no doorknob on the door. Someone has taken it away so it can't be opened. But the ghost is clever. With a kitchen knife I open the door and there under the bed are many sizes of saucepans, pots, and kettles. I take the lids off them, one by one. The first is filled with pound notes, another with fives, and another with tens—all stuffed full. I fill my pockets and rush home. Winnie is still sleeping on the couch, snoring her whiskey breath. I hand my mother the keys and three hundred pounds.

My father stands in the street at night, the searchlights swinging in the sky. Bombs are thudding, *whamp*. He has his rifle. Someone yells "parachutes." He opens the bolt and pushes a round into the chamber. The streetlights reflect off a white parachute carrying a flare. It floats out of the blackness. My father is wearing my mother's slip in the darkness. He put it on thinking it was his undershirt. He has on his army boots, his khaki wool pants, his tin hat, and he's holding his .303 Enfield rifle. But with my mother's lace-topped slip on his chest, in the flare light he looks like a ghost.

Five of us are living on a hill overlooking a placid pond with ducks and geese swimming in the still water. We are armed with various weapons, shotguns, and rifles. I yell, "Open fire!" The sound is deafening. The pond erupts. Nothing can live beneath the hail of lead missiles. Cordite fills the air. I run up the ridge and bayonet a Zulu. His blood spurts out from the aorta, splashing across the operating room wall. My gown and mask are drenched. The patient is dead within seconds, blood oozing over the green tile floor. The ping of the monitor stops. Helen is tied to the bed. Jeff and I are licking her body. Grace is sucking her vagina. Kay pushes me up against the shower wall in Taos. She holds me there, jerking me off into the raining water. Sperm runs down the drain. A chicken burns in the dustbin. I ride my butcher's bike, the basket full of meat, on a Saturday delivery. The "Keep Left" sign disintegrates. I fly through the air before I even hear the explosion. Blood runs from my nose and ears. The V-2 rocket has hit the next street. I vomit. "You have a good heart, Johnny." The pain of suffering is so intense, we all decide to become ghosts, like my father, his father, and their fathers in the mud trenches and the mothers coughing up dead babies, stacking them upon the parapets, fighting, unable to distinguish the living and the dead. Watch the game show as a ghost. Pretend over tea nothing is happening. Let me drink myself into painless ghostliness. The Nazi officer wants to shake hands in the middle of the death camp. The corpses are piled high, waxy skin over wretched bones. He offers his hand to the Allied officer. It is not accepted, as a bulldozer is plowing up the bodies. Jill is leaving Jeff. Henry is leaving Marcy and the kids. Chögyam is eating the leg of a dead baby in the charnel ground. The red sow-bitch is drinking puss out of a skull. Vajrasattva is in the mirror. I try to enter but I hit my face on the glass. It breaks my spectacles, cutting my face. Nancy is pretending none of this is happening by shopping at Bloomingdale's. William is bending down bare-bottomed waiting for the cane. Jenny is masturbating in the closet. Percy is dancing in Duluth.

Rinpoche says, "Johnny is hard to catch—he's like a ghost."

Fuck you, I think. It's my right to run from suffering, to cry in the bottom of a hole for a million years, eating and screaming and fucking, trapped in a solid egg. It's my right, it's my . . .

"You have a good heart, Johnny."

I cry out in my dream, looking around for my savior. There is no one in sight. Unable to swim I drown and become a ghost on the riverbank. Chögyam taps on the egg. I gasp and wake, dreaming into the day.

I listened to the sounds of the house. I could hear Rinpoche and his dog, Ganesh snoring down the hall. Max was still asleep. I wiped the sweat from my body, readjusted my thoughts, and went down the hall to the bathroom. As I showered I felt thankful it was only a dream. In time I could forget it. Ignoring the pain, I re-collected myself into the collection of images that maintained my self-illusion, dreaming I was awake.

Nevertheless, there remained in the recesses of my mind the paranoia that something was hidden. At unexpected times I was swept with the terror and uncertainty of my reality. My groundedness had begun to slip away and the terror of emptiness found me standing at the edge of an abyss.

*Chapter 5*

# Commentary

*I am continually caught up in my past, present, and future. I still have the notion that what is in my mind is reality. When the anxiety of groundlessness becomes intense, I retreat to memories of the past, trying to find some way of dealing with my emotional dilemma. Rinpoche's care and love of me during this time of being tossed between illusion and delusion is my only inspiration to carry on. Aloneness is terrifying. But he keeps saying, "I love you, you have a good heart."*

*At times I have overwhelming feelings of sadness and feel impenetrably alone. I long for union which I cannot find or define. I take refuge in doing ordinary things—cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, and making beds. I'm afraid to leave the house, as my panic attacks follow me.*

*The first people that I blamed for my total dilemma were my mother and father. In fact, in our society we tend to blame our parents for almost anything. Here, I am beginning to relate to the pain of their lives and to see them, like myself, trapped in never-ending cycles of karmic action. The stark reality of the world of pain and suffering is difficult to look at and immensely terrifying. I do not have compassion, but react in fear and numbness.*

*Rinpoche creates a ground in which I can go through all of this turmoil by providing kindness, generosity, compassion, and love for whatever I do. In response I pay attention to my art of serving him. It is the only way I can say thank you. And this, I know, he understands as well.*

*The egg theme, which Rinpoche used here, he also used when he sang "Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again." It's also interesting to note that Garuda, the mythological bird, hatches out of the egg fully formed and is able to travel with a single movement of its wings from one end of the universe to the other.*

*The disappearing into the mirror is referred to in Rinpoche's poem* Memorial in Verse[21] *lines 19 and 20.*

21 "Memorial in Verse" from the book *First Thought, Best Thought—108 Poems,* Chögyam Trungpa, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1983, p. 152.

*Chapter 6*

# Promised Land

Tilopa and Horatio Hornblower visit the site of the magic kingdom.

Standing on the wild highland moor, the moss soft underfoot, I look down the heather-covered slope. My gaze rests upon the clear blue lake with its perfect round island in the center. Upon this island stands a single giant tree. In the branches sit all the lineage holders: Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, and all the rest, with Trungpa Rinpoche in the center top. They are all drinking, laughing, and having a great time. I'm stuck on this hillside doing prostrations. My mother is on my left side, my father is on my right, and Max is behind me. They are all prostrating with me.

So here we go. I start to mutter:

"I take refuge in the Buddha,
I take refuge in the dharma,
I take refuge in the sangha."

I'm huffing and puffing away, up and down, down and up, moving the beads in my right hand one at a time, only eighty thousand five hundred to go. Sweat is running down my face and

my back is as stiff as a board. I look to each side. My mum and dad are having a hard time as well, so I tell them to sit down and rest. They thank me for my kindness as they rest in the soft moss. But I keep that fucker Max popping up and down behind me. I slip, falling in my haste on my right side.

"Fuck! Fuck the guru. Fuck the Buddha, fuck the Dharma, fuck the Sangha."

With my eyes still closed I rub my arm, flexing my throbbing wrist. I look over at the tree. Those fuckers are all laughing at me. "Fuck you, you lazy bunch of loafers. Why don't you go out and get a real job or help someone," I exclaim to my mind. "I'll show you. I'm going to finish these fucking prostrations, then I'll be sitting in that fucking tree and I'll have all you fuckers prostrating on this goddamn fucking sonofabitching hillside."

They start laughing so hard some of them are falling out of the tree. I'm getting really mad now, moving up and down as fast as I can. Max can't keep up. He falls, sobbing, on the ground behind me. "Serves you right, you fucking chink." Up and down, up and down I fly, the beads moving in my hand. The guys in the tree are now looking worried. Their jobs are on the line. Perks is coming. Triumph shines in my mind. "When I get over to that island I'm going to get a chain saw and cut that fucking tree down. Then you'll have to find some other place to hang your lazy asses." At that Tilopa drops his fish, looking shocked. "Ha, Ha, I think I will. I will . . ." *Snap.* The bead string breaks in my hand. I hear the beads scatter across the floor. I open my eyes to see them running into the shrine room corners. "Shit! Shit!" I bellow.

Sitting in a sweating heap I start to pick them up, putting them carefully into the shrine table bowl. My sacred mala beads were given to me by Rinpoche. Frantically I count them. "Fucking hell, there's three missing." Searching all over I find only one. Now I feel sorry that I yelled at Tilopa. Sadness engulfs me. A tear starts in my eye, then stops. "Perhaps Tilopa had planned this all along. Remember the stunts he pulled on that sucker Naropa?" Now I'm getting mad again. "Well, I'll be a

sonofabitch, I have a realization! Those bastards in the tree had planned this all along to try to get me to stop my prostrations so that I would not get to Bliss Island and have a good time like them. I bet Max is in on this as well, and Rinpoche—he's the ringleader."

I'm really pissed off at their deception. I feel betrayed. "How could they do this after I have given them all my devotion?" Now I'm sad again. "How could they do this?" Then I'm angry again. "Those sonofabitches, I'll show them." I pick up the bowl with the sacred beads and stomp toward the shrine room door. Turning, I yell at the shrine, "I'll be back, motherfuckers." I open the door and run smack into Rinpoche, who is standing there in his Mrs. Mop cleaning outfit with a broom in his hands. He says, "Are you okay, Johnny?" Startled, I become very British and exclaim, "Oh fine, Sir, I'm fine. Just practicing, Sir."

I feel his eyes following me as I run up the stairs to change. I push open my bedroom door and put the sacred beads onto the bedside table with great care, then flop onto the bed. I look around the room feeling safe in its familiar order, the way I have set it up with the pictures of Vajradhara,[22] His Holiness, and Rinpoche, with the flowers, my revolver under my pillow, the bullets in the drawer wrapped in my girlfriend's underpants, and the jar of Vaseline for jerking off. I reach down to hold my penis. It gets hard as I think of Sara. "Wow," I think, "Rinpoche is really crazy."

"The way to get money from Rinpoche is to ask him as he wakes up," says Ösel.[23]

Rinpoche's twelve-year-old son is visiting from Boulder. He wants to buy a model airplane and needs the money.

---

22 Vajradhara, "Bearer of the Vajra." The iconography of this deity is represented as blue, one-faced, two-armed, holding a vajra and bell. This deity is visualized by the student while doing prostrations.

23 Ösel Mukpo was later to become Mipham Rinpoche and the Sakyong of Shambhala Buddhism.

"He always says yes to anything as he wakes up," Ösel explains to me.

Up we go to the bedroom. Ösel stands over the sleeping body of his father.

"Rinpoche, Rinpoche," he calls softly. "Can I have some money to buy a toy airplane?"

"Yes," comes the drowsy answer from the blanket-covered pile in the bed. "Ask Johnny to take some money from my wallet." Then the blanket goes back to its familiar snore. Ösel looks at me with a knowing smile, proud at having outwitted his dad.

Pretty good trick, I think.

Years later, however, the trick worked in reverse. When Ösel wanted money for a dirt bike Rinpoche said, "Okay, I'll give you a hundred dollars for sitting in meditation for one hour." Easy money, thought Ösel. He sat for three hours and made three hundred dollars. The next time he wanted something the price went down to fifty dollars an hour, then twenty-five an hour, then ten, then five. In the end he was sitting for a week to get a hundred bucks. Ösel would always hide when his Holiness the Karmapa or Khyentse Rinpoche would visit.

"I don't want to be a tülku," he would say to me. "I don't want to be a tülku." To me, it sounded like Brer Rabbit not wanting to be thrown into the brier patch.

"I don't want to be a tülku," he pleaded to me.

"Okay, okay," I said. "Let's hide and go to the movies."

Ösel brightened. "Great!" he said. "What's showing?"

I opened the paper. "*The Man Who Would Be King,*" I read aloud. We went, and on the way home he was Danny and I was Peachy.

"Let's play a trick on our guests tonight," said Rinpoche.

The guests had all gone into Greenfield to do some grocery shopping, which was nice of them. But I suspected they were also glad to escape from our madhouse. A trick on them would seem in perfect order. Rinpoche had my full attention.

"We will pretend that you and I are able to do ESP together." He continued, not waiting for my surprised look of puzzlement, "You will go out of the room and our guests will pick an object. When we call you in, I will say, 'Is it this? Is it this?'" he said, pointing to a candlestick and then an ashtray. "We will go on and I will point and say, 'Is it that?' The second 'Is it that?' will be the object they have chosen. Got it?" he asked.

"Yes, Sir," I said. "You will say, 'Is it this? Is it this?' and so on. When you say the second 'It is that?' I'll know that is the chosen object."

"You got it," he smiled, sipping his sake.

That evening, after supper, I brought in a tray of drinks for the guests and as I was passing them out Rinpoche said, "You know, Johnny and I have developed ESP together, because of his close connection to me."

There was silence, then someone asked, "Really, Rinpoche; how does that work?"

"Well," said Rinpoche, "let's see . . . Johnny, shall we give them an example?"

I said, "Sure, we could do that."

"You go out of the room and don't come in until we call you," he directed. I went into the kitchen.

After a while, a voice called out from the sitting room, "Major Perks, you can come in now." Returning to the sitting room, I stood in the center facing Rinpoche, who said, "Johnny, cover your eyes so we can make contact."

I did as I was commanded, covering my eyes, seeing that Rinpoche was covering his eyes also.

"All right," he said, "let's proceed." He pointed to various items in the room and said, "Is it this?" I repeatedly said, "No." When he said, "Is it that?" for the second time, pointing to a picture on the wall, I replied, "Yes, that's it." Everyone was unmistakably impressed.

"Okay," said one of the guests, "how about if Rinpoche leaves the room and Major Perks stays here?"

Rinpoche agreed, going out to the kitchen. One of the guests pointed to the Dupont lighter on Rinpoche's side table. "Let's make it that."

It was agreed. Rinpoche was called in. "Close your eyes, Major," said Rinpoche. I closed my eyes tightly. I could see he had closed his eyes also. Then we went on to do the "Is it this?" and "Is it that?" act. On the second "Is it that?" I pointed to the lighter. Rinpoche said, "Yes, it's that!" The guests were fooled and amazed and I let them think what they would about our ESP capabilities.

The night passed into early morning and we all went off to bed. I went up with Rinpoche and his female friend and tucked them both into bed. They were reading Asterisk comic books with dual laughter as I retired to my room. I jumped into my own bed and soon passed into deep sleep.

A few hours later I sat up in a panic, sweating and with my heart racing. A thought had rushed into my mind. How did I know Rinpoche had closed his eyes during the second demonstration? I went over the sequence of events in my mind. First I had closed my eyes. Then I had seen that he had his eyes closed also. I was sure of this. But how was I able to see this if my eyes were closed? What kind of trick was this being played on me? Was he trying to take over my mind? Then it came to me—Asian mind control! That must be it! I was in a panic. I ran around to the participants from the previous night asking them if Rinpoche had had his eyes closed. Some could not remember. Others said, "Yes, I think so." It didn't help my freaked-out mind. I decided to ask Rinpoche.

That morning as we were performing our bathroom ritual, trying to hide my agitated state behind British reserve I said, "Sir, did you close your eyes last night after I did?"

Rinpoche peered into the large bathroom mirror, opened his eyes wide, and said, "Two minds become one."

As my confused mind tried to sort that one out he started to brush his teeth with great vigor, his eyes growing larger. Our

images reflected in the mirror and the unreality of the situation flooded my vacant mind. It became filled with a thought: Was I the reflection or was I me? I struggled to contain the rising panic.

Moving over to the shower spigots, I involved myself in getting the water temperature correct for Rinpoche to enter. It was a relief to feel the water on my hands. At least this was real! As the naked Rinpoche entered, I handed him the Pears soap and closed the glass door. Watching his shadow on the mottled glass and standing ready with the towel, I became myself again. It was some weeks before I could look into a mirror without some feeling of uneasiness returning. In order to escape I busied myself in the household work of cooking, cleaning, and taking care of Rinpoche, whom, to protect myself, I had decided to label as crazy.

I was not alone in thinking Rinpoche was crazy. Other students would ask me if he was acting crazy. The problem seemed to be that we were not dealing with an ordinary type of mind. His mind did not have predictable characteristics. For instance, there were not habitual patterns. He did not get angry or irritable. He did not seem to have passion in the ordinary sense. He was not jealous. None of these things seemed to stick to him. He was very unpredictable, acting without a normal moral code and his energy seemed endless. He was also able to do otherworldly-type things, like change his size, disappear in a mirror, and move with incredible speed, even though he was paralyzed on one side of his body. He could read people and events very accurately. All of this together was very disconcerting and I had a healthy suspicion of it all.

I had it in my mind that he or someone was manipulating and playing tricks on me. It was as though my reality were constantly being shifted, which made my situation very, very uncertain—almost shocking. Since he seemed to be the instigator of all of this he could only be crazy. But then there was that incredible warmth and love that he generated toward you that you felt throughout your mind and body.

All of this was in my mind as I came down the stairs into the sitting room. Rinpoche was seated in his chair by the fieldstone fireplace waiting for me to serve him a glass of sake. He looked up as I entered the room. I felt the penetrating warmth of his smile as he said, "Don't worry Johnny, I won't go crazy."

How could I not love him? He seemed to know what I was thinking, what I did, and why I did it without any judgment or criticism. He loved me and the others truly without conditions, which seemed crazy as well! I dropped the whole matter and poured the sake into the glass in his outstretched hand, content to feel the warmth of his energy.

"We will create an enlightened world together, Johnny," he said. "We will grow old together." That also seemed impossibly unrealistic. Days, nights, weeks, and months would go by with Rinpoche just sitting in that chair, steadily drinking sake and occasionally smoking Dunhill Reds.

I never knew beforehand when bedtime would be, at what time of day or night. It mostly depended on when the others would get tired of sitting around playing the Qualities Game. This was a game where one player would mentally pick a person and the others would try to pinpoint who it was by asking what kind of animal, tree, country, etc. he or she would be. The answers would be based on the qualities of the person, which hopefully would indicate to the other players the identity of the person. This game could go on endlessly.

Others would drop off to bed and I would be left with the chair-bound Rinpoche, waiting for my bedtime. Resentment would fill my mind that he did not seem concerned about me. Then he would get on the phone at 4 a.m. to speak with some student, saying, "Sweetheart, how are you?" The first time this happened the student would be delighted. In a year or two, when he might call ten early mornings in a row, the student would unplug the phone. Then we would get in the car and drive around to the house. He would bang on the door and a disheveled student would open it, surprised at the enlightened caller with his resent-

ful attendant. We would then all have afternoon tea at 5 a.m. or breakfast at 11 p.m. This guy was ruining my life!

I was constantly pissed off about not having the life that everyone else seemed to enjoy, with wife, car, children, and money. I got $300 a month plus room and board and no days off. Rinpoche and I were joined at the hip. Every time he wanted to go to the bathroom I was there. Change his socks, tie his shoes, press his pants, cook his food, feed his dog . . . What about me, me, me? After all, I was the one training to "get enlightened." Here I was acting like a servant, sometimes loving it and sometimes hating it. Now I wanted my, my life, life! Even when I went shopping for food I had a beeper on my belt. He would call and I would run to the nearest phone to call back. He would say, "Oh Johnny, are you okay? I just wanted to know where you were."

Where am I, who am I? I had no idea.

"Johnny," said the smiling warmth-generating doll, "I was thinking we need to open up our service situation, have some other people come in and cook, serve, and drive."

Great! I think. After all the work and devotion I have done he wants to replace me.

"Perhaps," he continued, "perhaps, Major Perks, you should become Master of the Kalapa Court."

My stunned brain began to realize the glory of that opportunity, the power, the uniform, the medals, the limelight! Finally I was being lifted up from servitude and I was hooked.

Here I am, the searchlight of enlightenment shining on me in my Master of the Kalapa Court uniform of blue and crimson. The fanfare of bugles is heard and on my breast is a single shining gold medal inscribed "Wounded at the Battle of Ego, the Hero Returns Undefeated."

I turned to Rinpoche and in my very best British accent I said, "Yes, Sir." After all, I reasoned, I would not be any use to enlightened society unless I was myself.

At the end our retreat year in late May it was decided that we would visit the Promised Land, the site chosen for the enlight-

ened society of either the near or far future, depending on whose story you listened to. The land that was chosen was Nova Scotia, Canada's Riviera. I was in favor of establishing enlightened society as soon as possible—a year or two at the most. Others seemed to be dragging their feet.

Our Grieves and Hawks uniforms from London were ordered but would not be ready in time for the trip. So I contacted a military surplus company in New York which I had located through their advertisement in *Shotgun News.* I ordered one dark blue naval uniform for Rinpoche and an army khaki uniform for myself. Onto these uniforms I sewed two bars of medal ribbons that Rinpoche had designed. On my uniform I sewed my Rupon of the Red Division insignia. "Rupon" was Tibetan for a company commander, which was the rank I then held. "Major" was pushing it a bit. Next to that ribbon I added the Iron Wheel medal and the Lion of Kalapa Court of Shambhala. This was jumping the gun somewhat because the Kalapa Court, which was to be located in Boulder, Colorado, had not yet been established. At most there were rumors of a house on Pine Street and an offer to purchase.

Sometime in the early light of morning Rinpoche, his consort, Jane, and I pored over the chart of the Province of Nova Scotia. It was to be a two-pronged attack. The Regent Ösel Tendzin with his Group "B" would advance by air to Halifax Airport. The three of us in Group "A" would go by sea, driving first to Portland and then taking the Nova Scotia Cruise Lines luxury ship up the coast. We would cross the Bay of Fundy to Yarmouth. The secrecy and stealth of our attack would surely take the natives by surprise. Finally, all of my training and reading of the Horatio Hornblower books would become useful information. Rinpoche would go as the Prince of Bhutan and I as his aide-de-camp, Major Perks, Lion of Kalapa. Jane would be Lady Jane, although I preferred to think of her as Lady Jane Gray. We were glad of our passports, which had our cover names of Chögyam Mukpo, John Perks, and Jane Condon.

The limousine that was rented for the ten-day operation was a silver Lincoln Continental. With great care I packed our evening dress tuxedos, as we planned to dine formally every night in the soon-to-be-enlightened province. We drove up to Portland, Maine, the next day to embark for the journey up the coast. Our limo was a bit oversized for the luxury liner, which looked more like a large ferry boat. After parking in the depths of its hull we found we could not open the rear doors more than six inches. Lady Jane could just squeeze through, but the Prince would never pass the gap. I pulled on his arms for a while until we realized the futility. Then the Horatio Hornblower in me became active. "The window!" I exclaimed. Lady Jane let down the rear electric window. The Prince put his arms around my neck and with Lady Jane holding up his pants we extricated him from the silver trap. On the ferry that morning, as the sun rose, the three of us stood on the upper deck and sang the Shambhala anthem. I threw an empty sake bottle overboard with a written copy of the anthem in it.

The Yarmouth dock smelled strongly of fish when we arrived and Rinpoche remarked that it reminded him of Tilopa. A good omen. We drove up to Halifax to meet the Regent's party and begin the expedition. (It had been named KOSFEF, short for Kingdom of Shambhala First Expeditionary Force. Later, there would be a medal ribbon for each member.) The Regent's force was already at the hotel I had chosen from the tourist brochure, the Horatio Nelson Hotel.

We had dressed in our uniforms earlier that morning on the boat, so we arrived at the hotel in style. Michael Root, the Regent's aide-de-camp, had arranged for the Shambhala flag we had hand sewn during retreat to be flown at the hotel entrance alongside the Canadian flag. Somehow I had it in my mind that there would be crowds attending our arrival. Instead, there was only the Regent's small party in their pinstriped suits and formal dresses. That evening we dined in our full evening dress at Fat Frank's, Halifax's only gourmet restaurant. There were speeches

and toasts to the formation of enlightened society. We all sang the Shambhala anthem, with Fat Frank and his waiters joining in the end chorus, "Rejoice, the Great Eastern Sun arises."

I felt like the Kingdom had already happened, although Jerry, who was the Dapön, or Head of the Military, looked very glum. Michael and I talked to him on the way back to the hotel. "This is all crazy," he said. "Take over Nova Scotia? Make it Shambhala Kingdom? It's nuts!" This should have been my line, but somehow I had been overtaken by the fantasy. It all seemed real, quite easy, as I explained to Jerry in my enthusiasm. He was looking at me like I was crazy.

"You know," he complained, "you all come into the Nelson Hotel and salute Rinpoche who is pretending to be the Prince of Bhutan. You have that Shambhala flag flying next to the Canadian real flag in the front of the hotel. That's crazy! People will think we're all crazy!"

"Well," I argued, "Fat Frank and his waiters had a good time. Everyone seems quite friendly."

"You just can't come in here and take over," said Jerry.

"Why not?" asked Michael. "No one else seems to be in charge."

Jerry just shook his head. "I don't know. Taking over a Canadian province, making Rinpoche king and then calling it the Kingdom of Shambhala. Doesn't that seem a bit weird to you?"

"No," I replied. To cheer him up I pointed out the good omens: Tilopa at Yarmouth, letting us fly the flag at the hotel, and Fat Frank who wanted to be one of us and seemed to be convinced of our reality.

The next day Michael and I set off ahead of the rest on our tour of Shambhala province. We had the task of locating suitable lodging in each town for our evening stop. The first town we came to was Glasgow, a destination chosen by me. To my surprise there were no inns or hotels, just a place by the name of

MacTavish's Tourist Stop. Half the letters on the neon sign were not flashing but Michael and I went in anyway. The worn carpeting was a bright red tartan. I began to have serious doubts. Michael asked to see a room and we went up the creaking stairs with MacTavish himself. He opened the door with a key chained to a piece of wood marked with a plastic six. Inside was a blue tartan carpet stained by years of spilled food and beer. In the center was an old iron bed that had once been white and a matching three-drawer bureau. A single bare light bulb hung by a cord from the tin ceiling.

"Where's the bathroom?" I asked. "Au, down to the end of the 'all," said MacTavish. Michael started to giggle. I was not giving up. If I could arrange to get a bagpiper to greet the Prince at the motel as he drove up, that would at least be something.

"Do you have a piper?" I inquired of MacTavish. "Oh, yer," said he. "We gets all the pipers. The *Halifax Herald, The Nova Scotian Weekly,* we gets them all." Michael let out a roar of laughter. I slapped my hand to my head and sternly hissed to him, "I am trying to put some pomp and circumstance into this." Michael was collapsing with hilarity. "Yes," he sputtered between gasps of laughter, "but we have too much circumstance and no pomp."

"Let's find a place to get a drink and have dinner," I suggested. We drove around the small bleak town in about ten minutes. There was a fish-and-chip type café and a Chinese restaurant. That was it. "No need to dine in tuxedos tonight," I thought.

The main party arrived several hours later and there was quite a bit of joking about the rooms. Rinpoche asked about the dining arrangements and I described what I had found. "Is the fish-and-chip café very Nova Scotian?" asked Rinpoche.

"Yes," I replied. "They have something on the menu called Solom Gundy. Also, cod tongues and cheeks."

"That will be fine," he said.

"What shall we wear?" I asked. No one had brought any jeans.

"Tuxedos without the military ribbons," was the reply. I rolled my eyes up into my head and looked over at Lady Jane for help. None was forthcoming. The Regent made a mild but ineffectual protest. Michael just laughed and Jerry became even gloomier.

We all showed up at the café, with its plastic-draped tables and paper napkins, in our best evening dress. "This is crazy," whispered Jerry to me as we went in. I was inclined to agree. To my surprise the Nova Scotians were very hospitable, putting tables together and finding some cotton tablecloths and matching napkins. They were quite excited to have us there and the Prince was more than charming, explaining that we were touring the province. He also intimated that we might be interested in purchasing a large property so that we might spend more time in such a delightful country. The following day MacTavish's one phone in the lobby was ringing off the hook. The whole of Nova Scotia was, it seemed, for sale.

The next morning Michael and I set off again. We had looked at a map, where I had spotted a shortcut to the Annoplis Valley. All we had to do was cross the bridge at Bridgewater. We drove for miles over back roads, past abandoned farms and small towns with empty stores. The blacktop road became dirt. Michael, driving along at high speed, came to a screeching stop at the edge of a cliff. I looked at the map in puzzlement. Michael called out to a man chopping down trees by the cliff. "Where's the bridge to Bridgewater?" he yelled.

"Oh, they ain't going to build that bridge for another four years," came the reply.

"But it's on the map," I protested.

"Oh yes," said the woodsman. "Well, we has to be ready, don't we?" Michael pulled out the bottle of rum stashed behind the backseat. We sat in the car and drank it all, watching the flowing river with its inaccessible further shore.

We were late getting back to the others, who had found a fairly good Best Western. It was the annual Apple Blossom Festival and

the selection of the Apple Blossom Beauty Queen was being held in the restaurant at the motel. Dozens of teenage girls at a high level of excitement were running about the motel in white gowns. For once, our tuxedos were the proper attire for the occasion.

Word was spreading that the Prince of Bhutan was staying at the motel. The organizer of the festival approached me and asked if the Prince would like to have the Beauty Queen "presented" to him. "Delighted" was the response from the Prince when I relayed the message. There is a picture in a local Nova Scotian newspaper showing a ring of Apple Blossom girls, and in their white-dressed center, with the Queen on his arm, is the smiling Prince. The caption reads "Prince of Bhutan meets Apple Blossom Queen. The Prince and his party are touring the Province."

Meanwhile, the phone at the Best Western motel was ringing nonstop with offers of property for sale. Jerry was freaking out about the FBI finding out that we were planning to take over Nova Scotia.

"Who else would want it?" asked the Regent.

At the beginning of the expedition I had been full of hope about creating a new society based on British Buddhist morality. Now, after being tossed about between the reality of Nova Scotia, the reality of the Prince, and the reality of the Apple Blossom Queen, I was unhinged again. Our last night was spent at the Pines Hotel in Digby, a town which at one time had been a resort. Jan, the Regent's attendant, came and spent the night with me. We were both too English to have any passion between us. We sat up in bed smoking cigarettes and sipping rum.

"What do you think of Nova Scotia?" she asked.

"I don't know," I answered. Then putting my doubts onto Jerry, I said, "Jerry is dropping out of the plan altogether. I hear he has resigned as Head of the Shambhala Military."

"Yes," murmured Jan. There was silence. I took another sip of the rum, feeling it burning in my mouth.

"Well, I think it's wonderful," she said, feeling my hesitation. "I plan to move up here as soon as possible and join the sangha in Halifax."

Her cheerfulness was infectious. I smiled and said, with all my doubts evaporating, "I am going back to Boulder. We are creating the Kalapa Court, a court for Rinpoche and the Kingdom of Shambhala."

"Yes," she added. "They need us, old chap. We are English. We are the only ones who can do it."

*Chapter 6*

# Commentary

*After the first seminary that I attended, I was given permission to do ngöndro by Rinpoche. I was, in the future, to attend six other seminaries. My feeling is that I got all my learning by being with Rinpoche and through my practice—particularly ngöndro. The thing about ngöndro is that it can't be explained in terms of what happens but only in terms of the mechanics of how it is done. What happens during ngöndro is a dynamic interaction between the yidam,[24] the guru, and the student. Rinpoche said it was like a sandwich, in which the yidam was on one side, the guru was on the other, and the student was in the middle. And it was a club sandwich, so it had a diamond spike through the middle in which all three were linked for eternity. So ngöndro practice is experientially fresh with each individual and each individual's path toward realization. We are not talking about dogma here, but real, intuitive, creative, experiential relationships with the practice of meditation.*

*In theory, one does 100,000 prostrations in which one physically throws oneself on the ground in a prostrate manner while at the same*

[24] Yidam—The chosen deity of a tantric practitioner, representing the practitioner's basic state of mind; the practice enables the student to acquire the qualities of a fully enlightened Buddha through the practice of deity yoga.

*time reciting a mantra and maintaining a visualization. The visualization is of a lake with an island in the middle. On the island is a tree and in the tree are all the lineage holders. You're standing on a hill overlooking the lake. Behind you is your enemy and on your right is your father and on your left is your mother. All around you are your friends and your sangha members and everyone is prostrating with you.*

*The effects of this practice can bring up all kinds of emotional display which can be felt directly, intimately, and excruciatingly as painful. But then there are moments of intense devotion, intense love, and intense delight. Where all this energy is coming from is like a great mystery which is yet to be revealed. But even here, one still has the goal in mind, which is to finish—to do 100,000. I should mention here also that many people start, but because of insurmountable obstacles in their life situations or because of mental turmoil they are unable to finish. This creates an extremely bad situation for the student and the teacher. It's like the student is walking around with a big smelly shit in his or her pants. And for the teacher, as well as the student, it means unfinished karmic connections.*

*Everyone experiences obstacles and realizations during this practice. My consistent problem was, of course, my mind. But Rinpoche, again, fired my imagination with thoughts of enlightened society because innately I wanted basic goodness, compassion, love, and an enlightened society. At the same time I still felt that this was an impossible dream. I was tossed back and forth between being what I thought I was and what I hoped to be. The reality of that was to fall through the middle which at that time I had no notion of.*

*It's interesting that at this point I was beginning to give up on my own ambitions of power and was beginning to relate to broader aspects beyond my self-conditioned habitual patterns. My self-reliance and individualism were transforming into the possibility of enlightenment for all beings. I had difficulty in relating my ngöndro practice with my everyday life. I still separated out my practice and my ordinary life, which was an obstacle yet to be overcome.*

*In the ESP game, Rinpoche introduced the idea of the mind of the student and that of the teacher being one. Again, my reaction was*

*to panic. The panic was based on the fact that I saw my mind as belonging only to myself—personally mine—individualistic and inviolate to others. The very idea that Rinpoche's mind and my mind could be linked meant to me that he would have power over me. It did not occur to me that his compassion was far beyond such a trivial pursuit.*

*I saw an enlightened society as being something futuristic and unobtainable by ordinary means. That is, I saw that the way to create enlightened society was to go out and conquer, subvert, or politically trick others into a quasi-British form of enlightenment based on my own ideas. Rinpoche constantly used the ordinary means and situations in Nova Scotia as being the creative relationship in which one could continually initiate the energy of enlightened society, on the spot, by using things as they were. He continually introduced to me the simplicity of one's personal actions—such as preparing a cup of tea, brushing one's teeth, cleaning one's room, relating to others. It is the simple care for oneself and others which is the basic ecology of enlightened society. In other words, if one would be a leader, then one has to work on oneself first. In order to serve others one has to be a servant.*

*Trungpa Rinpoche tells the story of when he confessed to his teacher that he had serious doubts about being an authentic tülku. His teacher, Jamgon Kongtrul,*[25] *seemed quite startled at that. He paused for a while and then he said, "Do you have devotion to me?" He caught himself halfway through the sentence and then he said, "Do you love me? Do you have devotion to me, do you love me?" Rinpoche said that the whole thing turned his concepts upside down completely and he realized that he was regarding the teachings as merchandise and never realized that they were a gift of love. When he realized that, he burst into tears, ran out of the room, and cried in the woods outside.*

---

25 "Shechen Kongtrul Pema Tri-me Lekpe Lodro ('Stainless Lotus Excellent Intellect,' 1901–1960) was the root guru of Trungpa Rinpoche. He was one of five incarnations of the renowned Rime teacher, Jamgon Kongtrul the Great." Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, authors notes.

*In my own love for Trungpa Rinpoche I had to go through the whole gamut of emotions from wanting to own the object of my affections to, when that failed, becoming resentful. Of course I had no idea what unconditional love might mean. I could see it displayed in Rinpoche himself. But I still didn't trust it because I couldn't take it, use it, or display it myself.*

*However, this was the beginning of developing compassion. Out of the pain of the whole situation in which I found myself entrapped, small glimmers of compassion arose. I began to see Rinpoche's teachings as acts of love. Even so, nothing was sticking, everything came and went. It was like one was being tossed upon a stormy sea unable to reach either shore.*

*Chapter 7*

# The Court

"You do it, but you don't do it," he said, running his tongue over the sword blade.

According to the *Great Commentary on the Kalachakra* by the renowned Buddhist teacher Mipham, the land of Shambhala was north of the river Sita in a country divided by eight mountain ranges. The Palace of the Imperial Rulers was built on top of a circular mountain. The palace was called Kalapa and it consisted of buildings stretching out over several miles with a park in the center.

Our Kalapa Court was more modest, but vast in terms of enterprise. It consisted of a house on Pine Street in Boulder, Colorado. The building had four bedrooms, two-and-a-half bathrooms, dining room, kitchen, two sitting rooms, a sun porch, and a small garden. Into this dwelling we stuffed nine adults, five children, and one large dog. Described another way, this was two families of four (Mukpos and Riches), one family of three (Voglers) assisting as servants, an adult couple employed as nannies, and myself as the Master of the House.

I had a twelve-by-seven-foot former storage room in the basement next to the boiler. When the boiler turned on it would blow

open my door. On my first inspection I decided that the room was the size of a ship's cabin—a small ship at that. It had two casement windows through which I could see people's feet as they walked past on the garden path. I became an expert on identifying people by their shoes. Into this room I built a single cabin bed. I also had a chair, side table, closet, and a large bell that was connected to push-buttons in Rinpoche's sitting room and also his bedroom.

Not that I spent much time in that room. I was up early and back to bed late. I was happily energized, creating this important part of Shambhala, the enlightened society. We purchased a copy of *Debrett's Correct Form,* an inclusive guide to everything from drafting a wedding invitation to addressing an archbishop. Also, of course, we obtained Emily Post's and Amy Vanderbilt's books on etiquette. A set of silver was donated, as were place mats, table linen, china, crystal, candlesticks, silver tea sets, napkins, serving trays, salt-and-pepper sets, place-card holders, oyster forks, and butter knives.

Hippies and beatniks, who one week earlier had been seen in jeans and tie-dyed shirts and sporting long hair and beards, were now outfitted in charcoal pinstriped three-piece suits or blue blazers with gray flannels for the afternoon. Evening wear was a tuxedo or evening gown, with hair trimmed, nails cleaned, and shoes polished.

In afternoon tea lessons we learned that a servant never enters the room at tea time unless rung for and that the hostess asks, preferably with an Oxford accent, "How do you like your tea, one lump or two?" We learned to serve tea sandwiches, pastries, slices of layer cake, pâté de foie gras, gingerbread, and biscuits.

Just two weeks earlier, any one of us might have been discovered lying nude on the beach, smoking pot and stoned out of his or her mind. Now we remembered our grandparents' trunk in the attic and out came the forgotten string of pearls, the diamond ring, the gold pocket watch, and the silver teapot. Truly a gracious tea!

The Prince let it be known that smoking pot was out. Drinking wine and knowing when to use red, white, rose, or brandy was in,

along with cigars and cigarettes with jewel-encrusted holders. Two weeks earlier you might have been at an orgy, drunk out of your mind, copulating under a table to the sound of rock music. Now you were dancing to a Strauss waltz in a room where servants carried trays of hors d'oeuvres and champagne in fluted glasses.

You bowed before asking for your name to be added to a young lady's dance card. Invitations and thank-you cards were always sent by hand or at least by post. Your personal card was dropped in the silver basket on the Hapsburg table in the front hall. Drapes were always drawn at 6 p.m. in the winter and at 8 p.m. in the summer. The staff lined the walkway when the Prince left on any extended trip and were there in the same formation upon his return.

Sometimes you were a guest; sometimes you were the servant. A small elite always retained their status of either guest or servant. Servants entered the house through the back, family and guests by way of the front entrance. Family only used the front stairs and servants the back hallway stairs. I, as head servant, was exempt from the rule and passed through the front entrance and used the front stairs.

In the heat of this social etiquette passion I sent to London for a military dress mess uniform of scarlet and bum-freezer black pants with gold stripes. Pips on the epaulets showed my rank as Major and chalk-white gloves were upon my hands. Later, an ivory-handled, gold-hilted sword hung at my side.

I wrote at that time "In His Majesty's Service." In Rinpoche's capacity as Sakyong of Shambhala, I used the honorific English term "His Majesty," which referred to his kingship capacity in the formation of the Kingdom of Shambhala. Unlike the British monarchy, the Shambhala system for kingship was based on the premise that the monarch was responsible for joining heaven, earth, and man in union. This was one of the first times that Rinpoche asked me to write about how we worked together. This writing fixed the way that I thought about my service to him at that time. The text follows:

## In His Majesty's Service
## Major John A Perks, O.L.K.
## The Master of His Majesty's Household

I am writing this essay because I was commanded to by His Majesty the Sakyong. His exact words last night in the kitchen were, "You should write about how we work together. It would help."

My reply was "Yes, Sir."

I do not plan to conjecture about the original command too much, but a little would be amusing: "What does he mean, 'It would help'? Help what? Help my life? Or help me get into trouble? I'm in enough of that already. Is he planning another cliff-jumping party for me, or am I planning it myself? Was he smiling when he asked? Was there that slight, mischievous glint in his eye? Do I have doubts? Yes. But I do know that in the maze of too much conjecture a big fat Minotaur is waiting to breakfast on me, so I had better get on with this latest task."

I am a servant. I am the head servant of His Majesty's household. I serve him directly as his personal valet and in turn, in various capacities, I serve His Majesty's family, the guests, the sangha, the postman, the bank clerk, the bank, the neighbor's dog, the tree he pisses on, the front lawn, my shoes—endless service. George III was riding through a park one day when he commanded the coachman to stop before a large oak tree. His Majesty got out of the carriage, walked up to the tree, bowed politely and began a long conversation with it.

I think that George III initially had the right idea—the idea of service to the tree. His problem, of course, was that the tree began talking back to him; and George III was well on his way to insanity. In the book *Emperor of China,* K'ang-hai, China's emperor from 1661 to 1722, discussed the idea of service.

Chu-ko Liang said: 'I shall bow down in service and wear myself out until death comes,' but among all the offi-

cials only Chu-ko Liang acted this way. Whereas the emperor's responsibilities are terribly heavy, there is no way he can evade them. How can this be compared with being an official? If an official wants to serve, then he serves; if he wants to stop, then he stops. When he grows old he resigns and returns home, to look after his sons and play with his grandsons; he still has the chance to relax and enjoy himself. Whereas the ruler in all his hard-working life finds no place to rest. Thus, though the Emperor Shun said, "Through non-action one governs," he died in Ts-ang-wu (while on a tour of inspection); and after four years on the throne Emperor Yu had blistered hands and feet and found death in K'uai-ch'i. To work as hard at government as these men, to travel on inspection, to have never a leisure moment—how can this be called the valuing of 'non-action' or tranquilly looking after oneself? In the I Ching[26] hexagram "Retreat" not one of the six lines deals with a ruler's concerns—from this we can see that there is no place for rulers to rest, and no resting place to which they can retreat. "Bowing down in service and wearing oneself out" indeed applies to this situation.

Certainly the idea and practice of "bowing down and wearing oneself out" is not alien to our own Kagyü lineage, nor is it reserved for rulers alone. Likewise, although one might say that the position I hold in His Majesty's service is basically groundless, I do have as a constant reference point the idea of relentless service, of eternally bowing down in service and wearing myself out.

The way His Majesty and I work together is rather like performing a dance, the tune of which may change at any moment. Because of this His Majesty is most insistent that I pay attention, and in particular that I pay attention to the small details. In the early days of my service His Majesty

[26] *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, the Richard Wilhelm Translation, Princeton University Press, 1977.

would ask me questions such as, "What's the guard's name?" "Who is in the house?" "Where is so-and-so?" And in order to avoid being constantly embarrassed, I began to explore those small details and take great pride in answering all his probing questions.

In those days we also played the pill game. In the morning and at night before retiring His Majesty took his medication. I would place a small pill on his hand; then, with one quick movement he would pitch the pill into his mouth and take a glass of water that I handed him. In order that this small act take place with smoothness and grace—and it was indeed a delight when it did—I found it necessary to pay attention to a very precise set of related details. I had to have in constant readiness a supply of pills and a tray with a napkin and a clean glass of cold water. I had to pick up the pill between my thumb and first finger and place it in exactly the right spot on His Majesty's hand, then be ready to pass him the water at the right moment.

Of course, this is not exactly the way it always worked. If I became too rigid about the whole thing I somehow wound up searching for the pill in the dust under the bed. His Majesty would then playfully bounce up and down on the bed, banging my head alternately on the bed and the floor. If I could overcome my embarrassment, that became a great joke and a source of inspiration as well. So it gave me as great a joy to drop the pill on the floor flawlessly as it gave me to pass the pill flawlessly. Gradually I was able to expand the lesson of the pill game to include other service situations. Gradually everything became a service situation.

Of course, I do still suffer. I am subject to resentment, stupidity, laziness, depression, anger, whatever. There is at least democracy in that, and I have my own fair share. The late nights can be particularly interesting. Instead of paying attention, I am perhaps thinking of how nice it would be if I could sneak away to my own little bed. The time drags on . . . 12:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m. I watch His Majesty just sitting, drinking his sake. I start my resentment game: "Will he

never go to bed? I've been yawning and nodding off for an hour. Can he not see that I'm tired? He's so selfish. How come he never thinks of me?" I sit there. He smiles at me and I smile weakly back. I know that he knows that I know. There is a small switch and I refuse to follow George III. Suddenly I am interested and paying attention to what is going on. In two seconds I am awake and we continue with laughter, writing poetry until 6:00 a.m.

Then I help His Majesty up the narrow stairs and we play the falling-down-stairs game. The object of this game is for him to crush me beneath his weight by falling on top of me—the greater the height of the fall, the better. As I roll him into bed he is still giggling.

Now, it may seem from these descriptions that His Majesty and I are great buddies, that we are the best of pals. In fact, we are not. I am the servant and he is the Master. I, remembering the Minotaur, have no wish to be his buddy. I am grateful to have the reference point of being his servant. I take pleasure in observing the correct form. I enjoy calling His Majesty "Sir"; and when I am moving with speed to execute my Majesty's commands I may even use the more salty "Aye, Aye, Sir." I am intensely proud of my Master and his ability to handle himself in both public and private matters. His skill as a swordsman is indeed great; and his compassion boundless. Even when he has won the falling-down-stairs game the formality of our roles does not cease. I might say, "I beg your pardon, Sir, but I believe you are on top of me"; and of course he is.

The important point in all of this is, of course, to observe the correct form with a sense of humour and a sense of playfulness; and to push beyond yourself, really wear yourself out. (Actually, the latter is impossible because you find yourself getting stronger with each wear.)

The Americans seem to have some problem understanding what "correct form" is. His Majesty was once invited to the house of a very important official for dinner. I was in attendance as his driver and guard. I left His Majesty at the

front door and proceeded to the kitchen and servant's quarters. There was no butler in the house, but there was a cook and several young girls, hired, I think, from the local Howard Johnson's. In charge of the household was a hostess-secretary, who, on being introduced to me, insisted that I "come in and have dinner with the folks." I was quite shocked and replied, "A butler never dines socially with his Master." (I was at that time the butler of His Majesty's household. In fact, in the early days I was cook, butler, housekeeper, laundry man and gardener all rolled into one.)

It was not that I did not want to dine with His Majesty. But it is only on special occasions that his Majesty dines with the staff. As Master of His Majesty's Household I would dine at His Majesty's table at official functions and would also dine with the family on some special occasions. But the fact is that one does not dine socially with one's butler, or indeed with any servant. It simply is not done.

I always make it a point to watch carefully what is going on, and to try to "get in stride" with His Majesty, so that there will be a sense of rhythm in the working relationship. At the house on 7th and Aurora there was a large mirror in the hallway. It was arranged so that I could see into the drawing room and yet remain hidden from the view of the guests. When His Majesty had guests for tea and needed to summon me, he had only to look towards the mirror and raise his eyebrows. In this way he could signal for me to come into the room without even having to ring his bell. Needless to say, the guests were most impressed.

There is also a strong sense of rhythm in the shower-taking ritual. I set up the bathroom in a certain way with the two kinds of soap, the shampoo and the towels. I pass everything to His Majesty in the correct order and dry him in the same way each time. This is also a good time of day for me to discuss any household business there might be with him, and the rhythm continues while we talk. It's the same pattern day after day. Of course, this pattern could change and another totally different one take its place.

> There is no point in getting sentimental about an existing structure if the context changes and a new structure is needed. What is important is that I continually pay attention so that the rhythm will continue in whatever we might be doing together.
>
> As His Majesty's servant I feel I have an obligation to keep private any family business that may come to my attention. I certainly never intend to write a popular book about my life with His Majesty and his family.
>
> His Majesty has said, "If the warrior-statesman has enlightened confidence, he could even employ an idiot servant." While I do not wish to give anyone too much hope, such was the case with me. I am especially grateful to the subjects of Shambhala for their patience and tolerance in allowing me to serve my King and his Kingdom.

The vision was small and vast at the same time. While our vision was great, our cash supply was small. We opened a second house on University Hill in the intellectual section of Boulder. At a Goodwill store in Denver the Regent purchased some old arm chairs from a long closed movie theater. These were reupholstered in blue silk brocade and the wood frames were gold leafed. Blue rugs were made and embroidered with motifs of the tiger, lion, garuda, and dragon. The Prince noted that they looked like giant bath mats.

The vision of Shambhala spread outward, embracing all aspects of life in the sangha. By now everyone had a uniform and an order of precedence was established. Every year on Shambhala Day this order was amended with new titles, orders, medals, awards, and proclamations being presented. The Regent set up golf tournaments. He walked with his entourage humming the theme music from the *Godfather* movie or danced in the halls to music from *Saturday Night Fever* and let the music blare out the open office windows.

Beneath the gold-roofed shrine hall in downtown Boulder the silent meditators stirred under their constantly flickering

minds. Lady Diana rode white Lipizzaner horses in Vienna or black Hanoverians at dressage competitions. Dyslexic Ösel went to study at Oxford and became a tulku prince. Everyone could say in Oxonian English, "Kathy's hair is black." The Prince's talks were transcribed into books and published by Shambhala Books. Once a hippie hangout, this publisher now had offices in Boulder, Boston, and London. Poetry was written by all, calligraphy was practiced with badger-, sable- or camel-hair brushes soaked in sumi ink. Plays were performed with robed samurai warriors caught in tragic love affairs, willing to die for love.

Love was everywhere—in beds, in closets, under the stairs, under the stars, in the woods, in the fields, in hot or cold tubs, in numbers of twos, threes, fours, fives, or sixes. On returning from a seminary Walter noted with some surprise that he had slept with twenty-six women during the three-month retreat. I counted and beat him by two. We both figured that with all that energy we could easily have finished our prostrations. Next year we did.

People were married in Shambhala weddings in full dress. Rose petals floated in the summer air, humming birds drank nectar from the centers of purple passionflowers, water lilies suspended in still, clear ice blue breathed out thick heavy-scented musk. We became drunk. Boulder ran dry of sake. We drank rum and gin.

Babies were conceived and born with Shambhala names, as were businesses. There were fabulous names like Gold Lake Oil, Three Jewels, Great Eastern Sun Trading, Trident Books, Monk's Café, Churchill's Pub, Ziji, Tara, and Sharchen. Some failed and some stayed. The Shambhala Military shot bows, rifles, and pistols in marksmanship competitions. They had encampments, did maneuvers, and played war games. The Prince in a field marshall's uniform with black polished riding boots rode the white stallion. We saluted, cannons boomed, bagpipes played, bugles sounded, and drums beat the time. Everywhere was the glitter of brass, gold, and white.

It was a flowering such as had never been seen before. Naropa University opened its doors. Every major city in the United States

and Europe had a Vajradhatu meditation center and ambassadors were sent out from the Court of Shambhala. When the Prince gripped my arm for support he guided me through the halls, streets, and airports. His step was sure and firm. It was as if I were the crippled one instead of him. The Court was filled with activity.

In one week I had a schedule of over 150 volunteer servants: guards, drivers, cooks, cleaners, nannies, gardeners, servers, secretaries, shoppers, and waiters. All were wanting to participate in the flowering energy that filled the Court, which made it indeed seem to stretch over several miles with a park in the center on the top of a great circular mountain. What had been created was an openness where everything could be explored. We were encouraged to practice, study, and investigate our inner and outer worlds and examine any resulting pain or pleasure.

In the midst of this creative turmoil the Prince challenged me on my military propensities with a casual remark made into the bathroom mirror one morning.

"When we take over Nova Scotia, Johnny, you will need to attack some of the small military bases there."

"Attack military bases!" I said with surprise. "Me?"

"Well, not alone," smiled the Prince, still looking into the mirror examining his freshly brushed teeth. "You could have a commando unit of Jeeps and halftracks." He was looking at me in the mirror as he continued, "You had a halftrack once, didn't you?"

"Yes," I replied, remembering the olive drab army vehicle I owned at the farming school I once ran, seemingly a hundred years ago.

"Well?" the Prince's voice sounded.

My mind activated like a World War II movie as our intrepid band in Jeeps and halftracks raced along the curved snake-like back roads of Nova Scotia toward the unsuspecting enemy. My khaki wool uniform blended with the green countryside, I gripped the metal frame of the Thompson machine gun in my capable hands. On my head was the red beret bearing the Trident badge and the motto "Victory Over War." I smelled the engine

oil fumes mixing with the flower perfumes of the country lane as we whipped along on our desperate mission. The sun glinted on our bayonets, or wait, perhaps it was night . . .

"Well?" asked the Prince again.

"Oh, oh," was the reply, as I returned from the battle to the bathroom. "Yes, yes, Sir," I said. "We could do that."

"Good," continued the Prince. "You might have to kill one or two."

Kill one or two? What's that mean—kill one or two? was my silent response.

"But I thought we are not supposed to kill," I said, somewhat alarmed.

"Just a few resisters," said the Prince.

Resister, what the fuck is a resister? ran through my mind. Out loud I asked, "Resister? What kind of a resister?"

"Someone may resist enlightenment," stated the Prince.

"Oh, those. Well, yes, we could take care of them," I reassured him.

"Good, good," said the Prince, turning to leave the bathroom. As he opened the door he concluded with, "Well, Major Perks, perhaps you could put all of that together."

I spent the next several hours studying Army surplus catalogs and *The Shotgun News.* At the local gun store I picked up copies of *Commando* and *SAS Training Manuals.* I made a list of equipment and concluded that this "invasion" was going to be costly. I went to the Prince.

"Where will we get the money to organize this armed commando force, Sir?" I said, almost saluting.

"Perhaps we could steal the equipment," he suggested.

"Wow," I exclaimed. "You mean like a covert operation." The words and idea thrilled me.

"Exactly," said the Prince. "And we need a code name for it." He contemplated for a moment and then said, "How about Operation Deep Cut?" As I turned the words over in my mind he continued, "Yes, what is needed here is a surgical strike."

I excitedly repeated the code name, "Operation Deep Cut, covert operation Surgical Strike." This was going to be worth killing just one or two!

"Yes," said the Prince with delight. "Buy some books on tactics and strategy. We should all study them. And you, Major Perks, will be in command." I could hardly wait to take my leave and get started on the campaign. I put on my military hat, saluted the Prince, and ran out of the room, tripping and falling down half the stairs in my haste. The Prince's head popped out of his sitting room doorway. "Are you okay, Major?" he called down to me.

"Yes, Sir, fine, Sir. I just missed a step," I replied, pulling my uniform straight.

"Good," he said. "Jolly good, jolly, jolly good. Carry on, Major." I saluted again and rushed down the remaining stairs.

I could not wait to tell the other officers in the military about my secret mission. They were all amazed. "Have you told David yet?" was Jim's response. "Not yet," I replied. David was the Head of the Military, now that Jerry had dropped out. I could not fathom why the Prince had chosen David for this position. David was a very unmilitary, slight of build, a Jewish intellectual. He looked more like Mr. Peepers in a uniform—nothing like Montgomery or Patton.

"I bet his balls shrivel up like raisins when I tell him about this," I scoffed. Indeed, David was quite alarmed at my description of "killing one or two resisters."

"Let me talk to Rinpoche before you do anything," he said anxiously, falling back in his chair.

"Okay," I said, adding with a tone of command, "go ahead, but it's all set. The Prince said so."

Later the Prince called me into his sitting room. I explained that David seemed hesitant about killing a few resisters.

"Oh, he's such a Jewish intellectual," said the Prince.

"Why, that's exactly what I think," I agreed.

"Really?" said the Prince, looking at me with curiosity. "Good, jolly good. You carry on, Major. I'll take care of David

and tell him you have a free hand." I left hurriedly to tell the other officers the latest news on my secret commando operation.

I had no idea that this new development was being mirrored throughout the Boulder Buddhist community. People were beginning to bring their secret desires and wishes to life and starting to act on them. Through the Prince's vision it was all available: to be an actor, artist, businessman, military man, whore, doctor, teacher, dancer, or poet. In my self-centered world I only noticed this energy affecting me and thought I was the only one. I had no ego, I told myself. I just wanted to kill a few resisters to an Enlightened World in a military takeover, and I had the commando group to do it. (Although a little fame would not hurt!)

I remembered once hearing the Prince saying, "You do it, but you don't do it."

What the hell did that mean? How could you do it but not do it? It made no sense. He was talking crazy again. You either did it or you didn't, I concluded, and I was all for doing it all.

Lady Diana, the Prince's wife, had confiscated his Scottish Eliot Clan kilt some months back because she felt he did not look good in Scottish regalia. It was rumored that the missing kilt was hidden at the mother-in-law's house.

"What we need is a practice run," said the Prince to me one morning. "Major, here's a job for your new commando group. We will invite Diana and my in-laws to the Court for dinner and while everyone is here your group will retrieve my kilt."

I saluted with a very big "Yes, Sir" and ran off to inform my comrades-in-arms.

The mother-in-law's house was situated in a small field near the edge of town. On the night in question we waited in our darkened limousine on a side road by the Court. There were four of us, dressed in black. We watched in nervous excitement as the mother-in-law's car pulled up to the Court and the occupants entered the building. "Let's go," I commanded in a hushed military tone, and the driver sped toward our goal. Near the house he shut off the headlights and silently rolled to a stop in

the shadows. We rolled out into the grass ditch and crawled on our bellies across the lawn. I pushed at one of the dining room windows. It opened and I was halfway through when Walter hissed, "The front door is open."

It was too late, however, as I was already pinned in the open window frame by the top window which had slid down on my back. My legs were dangling outside and my arms and head were inside the dining room. The others entered the dark house in a more upright fashion and hauled me through by yanking on my arms. We spent the next hour avidly searching for the kilt everywhere, even in the most unlikely places. Nothing.

We regrouped in the living room, feeling at a loss. I passed around a flask of rum after taking a big swallow myself. "Our first mission can not be a failure," I sturdily declared. The others seemed dejected. Walter, sitting on a wooden trunk, took a larger swig from the flask than the others. (I noticed these small details.) "What's that you're sitting on?" asked Ron, pointing to the trunk. Walter looked down between his legs. "Some kind of storage chest, I guess." We all had the same reaction. Four pairs of hands opened the lid and there on the top of neatly folded clothes was the kilt.

Triumphantly we returned to the Court. Dinner was finished and dessert was about to be served. I placed the kilt on a silver tray and presented it to the Prince and the seated guests. Lady Diana cried out laughingly "Oh no, Darling" to the Prince, who beamed and gave me the thumbs up sign. The other guests were delightedly amused.

In the following weeks we undertook other commando operations with odd code names: Operation Awake, Operation Blue Pancake, Operation Secret Mind, and Operation Snow White. "Why Snow White?" I asked the Prince. "Because she has to be woken up," was the reply. That made no sense to me. Why did you need to wake up a military operation when we were already totally awake and combat ready? I labeled the answer as crazy and added it to the collection.

During this time I started to have flashbacks to my childhood during the war. I had dreams of the bombing, the bodies in the yellow shrouds, the news footage of concentration camps. I began to feel confused about which was real, my remembrances of things past, the present military operations and the Court, or the future takeover of Nova Scotia. My uneasy feelings returned, as did the panic attacks.

I did the same old stuff to avoid confronting any of it. I immersed myself in work, sex, entertainment, alcohol, and food. I knew I was okay, if only I could get myself together. I poured out my woes to the Prince, who was no help. In fact, he did not seem to understand at all and was quite unsympathetic. The more I freaked out the more demands he made on me. He seemed to have forgotten I was here to get enlightened, and finally I decided that my best course was to pursue my Buddhist studies. This would surely be the best way to build some kind of foundation under my shifting world.

"Sir," I said to his image in the bathroom mirror, "I would like to study Buddhism at Naropa Institute."

There was a pregnant silence which I filled with my hope of hearing a positive response. He picked up his toothbrush and stated, "Too late for that." My hope for salvation instantly vanished and I felt groundless panic welling up in me.

"How are things going for the military encampment?" he asked, ignoring my devastation.

"I don't know," I said glumly. "I feel like quitting the whole thing."

Again ignoring my answer he continued, "You know, the Kingdom of Shambhala needs a navy." In the silence, broken only by the soft sounds of the Prince brushing his teeth, a glimmer of light grew in my dull brain. "A navy," I repeated, coming out of my daze.

"Yes," he smiled. "What do you call the head of the navy?"

"The admiral," I recollected.

"And under the admiral is what?" he probed.

"Commodore," I replied, Hornblower filling my mind.

"Well," declared the Prince, "I'll be the admiral and you will head up the navy as the commodore. We will announce it at the Shambhala Day Investiture. Also, Major," he added, "we need to make your knighthood official. 'Commodore Major Sir John Perks, Lion of Kalapa.' How does that sound?"

I had been liberated from the groundless hell of not knowing. Tears came to my eyes as I thanked him with humble gratefulness. "Thank you so much, Sir."

"You are more than welcome," graciously responded the Prince. "You have earned it. Congratulations."

I could hardly wait to tell the others of my good fortune. That night we celebrated long into the morning. Walter and I drank an entire case of wine together. I had an uneasy feeling that I was trying to drown something out but it was hard to put a finger on what it was. I had been given everything by the Prince, but somehow my images of what I was and what I should be kept shifting.

It was like I was tormenting myself, unable to settle on any of my projections as being real. I was being tossed between being desperate and being lulled into stupefied meditation. My arrogance imprisoned me. Success or failure brought only joy or depression. Spirituality had just become self-confirmation. I wanted to vomit out the whole mess, spew it across the kitchen floor. But even that reality seemed futile. It was like living inside a kaleidoscope. Whichever way it was shaken another set of projections formed that felt like a solid glass imprisonment. Unable to find liberation I collapsed upon my bed in a drunken state. Ananda[27] leans against the door lintel and weeps.

---

27 Ananda, Cousin of Shakyamuni Buddha, who became the Buddha's close personal attendant and disciple. He's credited with convincing the Buddha to allow women to practice the Buddha's teachings.



*Author (middle), with Gregory Bateson (left) and Jim Herndon (right), at an education workshop at Naropa Institute.* *Photo: George Holmes*



*The retreat in Charlemonte. The Prince tries on his military cap. He instructed the author to outline a moustache with magic marker to see what it would look like.* *Photo: Author*



*Rinpoche sleeping out in the garden of the house at 7th and Aurora.* Photographer unknown



*Gold Lake Oil safari to Texas on the search for black gold. Author and Trungpa Rinpoche at site.* Photographer unknown



*Rinpoche answering the phone at the Kalapa Court.* Photographer unknown



*A strategic military conference between Major John Perks and Major James Gimian.* Photographer unknown

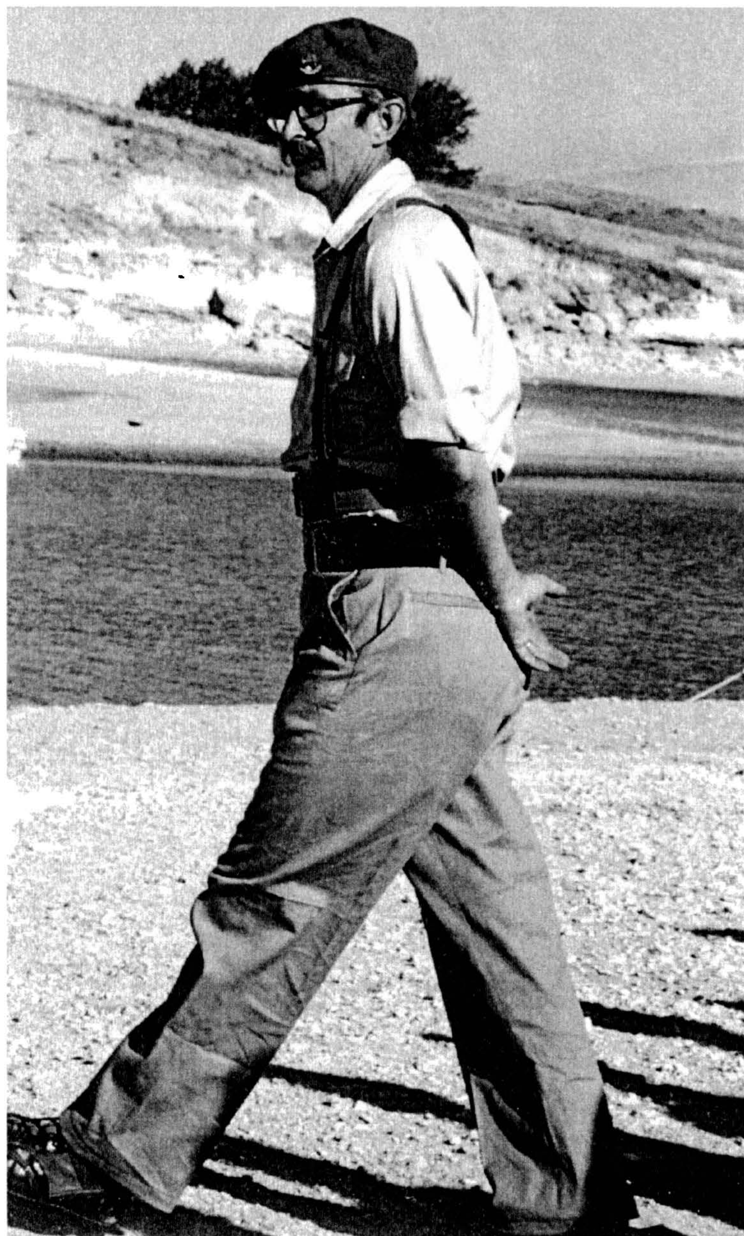


*He said, "Let's put on our uniforms and go and have our pictures taken together."*
*"Why?" I asked.*
*"It will help later on," he replied."*

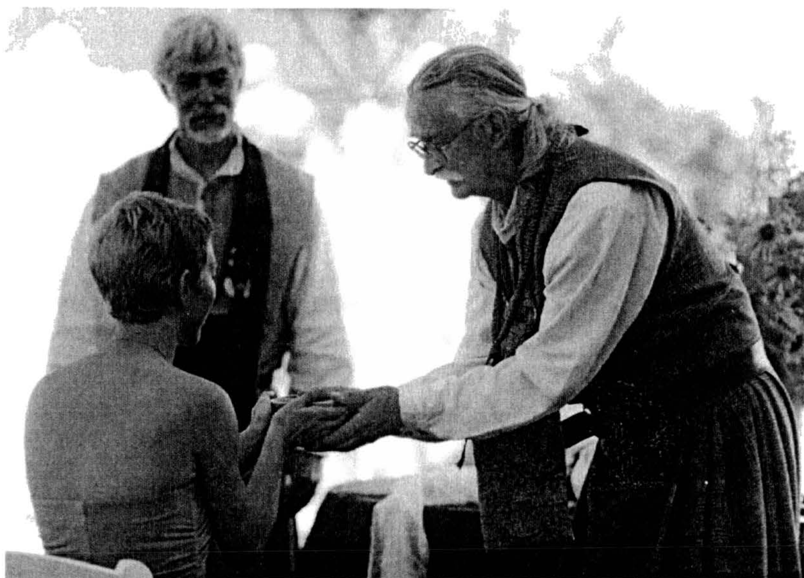
*Photo: Jarvis of Halifax*



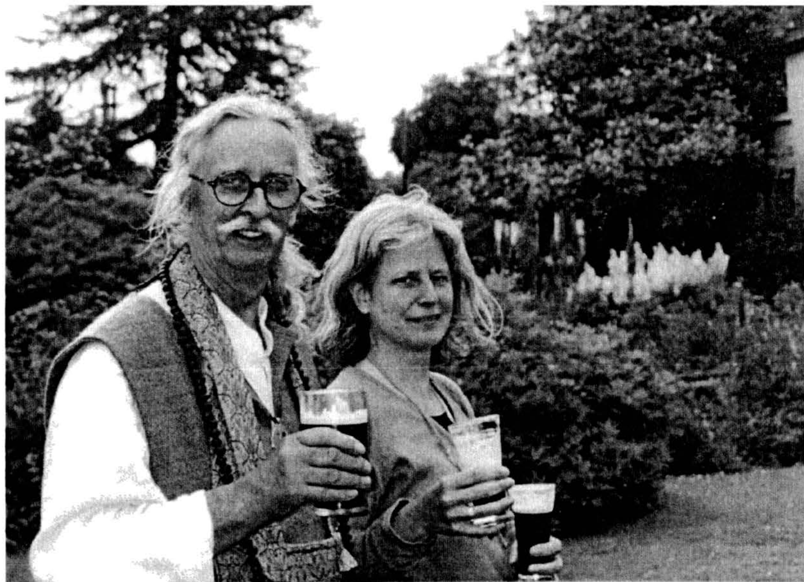
*Rinpoche in his Scottish Highland regalia with the Eliot Clan kilt.*
*Photo: George Holmes/Blair Hansen*



*Commodore Major Sir John Perks inspecting the troops before a raid.*
*Photographer unknown*



*Rev. Bill Burns and author performing a Celtic Buddhist marriage.* Photo: T. McCarthy, 2002



*Author and Ven. Margaret Junge, Celtic Buddhist Lineage Holder, drinking Guinness in Ireland.* Photo: Bill Burns, 2001

Chapter 7

# Commentary

*It is probably impossible for me to fix an exact time in my mind when the idea came to me of a Court. But if I was asked to fix a time, it would be that time at Tail of the Tiger when George Marshall and I were assigned to repair a door and doorframe leading into Rinpoche's bedroom. While working on that doorway, I was continually thinking about how I could be close to Trungpa Rinpoche, wondering what service I could provide. And it was then and there that I realized that he needed a butler, someone who could take care of him and his household.*

*In a burst of inspiration, I said to George, "I'm going to be his butler."*

*And George, without any surprise at all, said, "Well, if anybody can do it, you're the one."*

*Later, at the first seminary, I asked Rinpoche about being his butler. And, somewhat noncommittally, he said, "Well, we shall have to see."*

*I'm sure that I probably exaggerated my experience and knowledge of domestic service. But I had been a footman in England and a waiter at the Savoy Hotel in London, as well as bar boy at the University Club. Plus, I was well-versed in the P. G. Wodehouse sagas*

*of Jeeves, the indispensable man-servant. While I admired Horatio Hornblower, the person who seemed to me to be the star in the novels was Brown, Hornblower's coxswain, someone who was self-reliant, who could put together anything out of nothing.*

*There was never any doubt in my mind about Rinpoche being the master or imperial figure. He was in all senses an enlightened ruler of beings. Even though at the time I had no understanding of enlightenment, I could still spot a ruler of men and women when I saw one. I remember, first as a boy and then as a teenager and a young man, a feeling that I was waiting for something, for some service. And in my mind, meeting Rinpoche was the answer to that search. It was unnecessary for me to search further. He was the captain and I was his coxswain, period.*

*Even though my understanding was completely fictitious from any point of view, as a teacher Rinpoche was able to see the individual creativity, why the fiction was invented, and have compassion and complete appreciation for its individual manifestation and brilliance. He was this way with all his students.*

*When I arrived on the scene, in 1973 just before the seminary at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, I found the etiquette around Rinpoche to be somewhat relaxed and informal. Some students referred to him as "Rimp"; hence his nickname, "Rimp, the Gimp," referring to his paralyzed left side. Some students with doctorates in philosophy and others with advanced university education considered themselves his equal. I remember once when Rinpoche was going to the refrigerator to get himself a sandwich, one of the students said, "Hey, Rinpoche, while you're up, could you make me one too?" which he readily did without any comment. Quite often when he would stay at somebody's house they would put a mattress and sleeping bag on the floor while they retired to their comfortable bedrooms. He never complained about this.*

*In group meetings and otherwise, I began to address him as "Sir." Some people felt this was somewhat strange. But gradually it caught on. Not that anyone's attitude was any different from anybody else's. They may have been stuck on their relaxed American etiquette,*

*but I was equally stuck on my somewhat uptight British etiquette. However, some type of change to a more formal etiquette concerning Rinpoche was timely. At Naropa Institute, I co-taught several workshops with Gregory Bateson and Jim Herndon, which were residential workshops. It gave me a chance to work on the aspects of running a dormitory house and arranging dinners.*

*I was asked by Rinpoche to run the household for Khyentse Rinpoche's first visit to the West. Physically, Khyentse Rinpoche was quite tall, and psychologically, his radiation was very large. I lived in the basement of the house and would wake at 4:00 in the morning to prepare tea for him and take it upstairs to his bedroom. After I served the tea and did prostrations he would bless me by placing his enormous hand gently on my head. It was the highlight of starting the day. How could anything become an obstacle after such a complete blessing?*

*One evening Khyentse Rinpoche was to give a talk at the Vajradhatu Buddhist Center. I asked him if he would like me to bring a thermos of tea for him to drink during the talk.*

*He said, "No, that is not necessary."*

*Trungpa Rinpoche arrived to escort Khyentse Rinpoche to the Center. We were just about to leave when Trungpa Rinpoche said to me, "John, where's Khyentse Rinpoche's tea?"*

*I explained to Trungpa Rinpoche that Khyentse Rinpoche had said he didn't want to have tea.*

*Trungpa Rinpoche said, "Never mind that, just bring it."*

*So I hastily made the tea and put it in a thermos and brought along Khyentse Rinpoche's teacup. When we arrived at the Center Khyentse Rinpoche took his seat on the throne, next to the shrine. I walked forward to place the teacup on his table and he waved me away. So I retreated and stood in the doorway of the shrine room.*

*Trungpa Rinpoche came up to me and said, "You haven't given Khyentse Rinpoche his tea."*

*I replied, "He doesn't want any, Sir."*

*Rinpoche placed his hand in the middle of my back and gave me a push into the shrine room, saying, "Give him tea."*

*With some trepidation I approached the throne, and without looking at Khyentse Rinpoche I placed the cup on the table and poured the tea. I then looked up and he looked furious. I practically ran back to the doorway of the shrine room where Trungpa Rinpoche was standing.*

*Some minutes passed and Trungpa Rinpoche said, "Go and pour him some more tea."*

*I made some ineffectual and vain protest but was again pushed into the shrine room. As I crossed the floor toward the throne I looked up and Khyentse Rinpoche glared at me in a threatening, angry way. My hand literally shook as I poured the tea into the cup, whereupon I dared look up again and found Khyentse Rinpoche collapsing in laughter. I looked back across the room and Trungpa Rinpoche was also holding himself up against the doorpost laughing. Feeling myself caught in the open ground between them, I laughed too.*

*Khyentse Rinpoche asked me through an interpreter if I would like to come and be a monk at his monastery. I was extremely tempted to do that. But then I said, "I really feel I must stay with Trungpa Rinpoche," and I thanked him profusely.*

*He smiled and said, "You made the right choice."*

*Love and compassion generated by Khyentse Rinpoche came to an abrupt end when he left the house in Boulder to continue his tour of other centers in the West. I was left alone in that house which had been the center of so much activity and all that remained were glasses, tea cups with the remains of dead leaves, and the ashtray with the half-smoked Dunhill Red cigarettes left by Trungpa Rinpoche. I felt completely desolate without his presence. I had not yet learned how to fix that presence within my heart. However, when I did learn how to do that it made the desolation much more acute and sharper.*

*Sometime after Khyentse Rinpoche's visit, Trungpa Rinpoche asked me to organize his household in a small house at 7th Street and Aurora, which had also been the home of Scott Carpenter, the astronaut. This house was rented for a year by Vajradhatu, the Buddhist church. In residence would be Trungpa Rinpoche; his young son, Ösel*

*Mukpo; David Rome, Rinpoche's secretary; and myself. Max King would be the chef, but he would live elsewhere with his wife. When I asked Rinpoche about how formal he wanted this household to be, he replied, "As formal as you can make it."*

*He also added, "You should open it up and invite other people to serve. You can train them in how to do that." In the sangha, there were several people working as waiters and waitresses in different area restaurants and I approached these people to help me start some kind of service for Rinpoche. Among them were Joanne and Walter Fordham, who were destined to become valued members of the Kalapa Court staff. I took care of Rinpoche: dressing him, bathing him, and washing his hair.*

*He said to me, "You should become very intimate with my body."*

*I cut and filed his nails, combed his hair, washed and ironed his shirts, polished his boots, put sage leaves under his pillow, cooked and served his meals—leaving the evening meal for Max King—awoke in the middle of the night to make him corned beef sandwiches, and covered him with a Scottish blanket when he fell asleep in a chair after a hard day's work at his Vajradhatu office. I vacuumed, I polished, I washed, I served in a creative atmosphere unhindered by any comment except, "Thank you. Thank you so much."*

*Some nights, we would take Rinpoche's bed outside into the garden and he would sleep out there, at times alone and at times with a consort. At Rocky Mountain Dharma Center, in Red Feather Lakes, Colorado, Rinpoche had a small one-bedroom trailer and we would cook outside. The smell of wood smoke permeated our clothes, mixed with the smell of fresh earth after a rain, mixed with sage. I soon found that I could cook and serve just as well from a campfire as I could at the Court. We even carved chopsticks from birch branches and made chopstick rests. I slept in a tent next to Rinpoche's trailer. We did target practice with crossbows and longbows.*

*Previously there had been just the Kasung Guards. Now Rinpoche instituted the Kusung Guards, who would be the Court, or household, guards. I thought it was somewhat like when ancient Celtic*

*kings had their households and relied on their most closely related family to be guards and servers. It also reminded me of the relationship between Buddha and Ananda. The others, the Kasung guards, made fun of us and called us "the chamber pot boys," as we would empty Rinpoche's chamber pots, placed under his bed every evening. The first of the Kusung guards were the rejects from the Kasung: Mipham Halpern, Ron Barnstone, and Neil Greenberg. They may have been rejects but they fit into our small Court Mandala with perfection.*

*Mipham Halpern had been a close student of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. He was the one who told me that when Suzuki Roshi died, Trungpa Rinpoche cried for a week until blood ran from his eyes. Ron Barnstone had been born in Mexico. He consumed, regularly, large amounts of liquor, seemingly without effect. He was the only one I know to have drunk water from the Ganges River without getting sick. Neil Greenberg was so clumsy he would fall over anything while serving, but he was persistent in his devotion. I soon found that the reason these three had been rejected by the Kusung was that they couldn't follow orders. So rather than burdening them with unneeded direction, I made a loose outline in which each could find his own way. So our service, including mine, had a very fluid elegance.*

*Within that fluid structure Trungpa Rinpoche could operate. It was rather like we were the container out of which he could join heaven, earth, and man. It was interesting that many years later when I started to work as a butler to Bill Cosby, the comedian, I asked him how he wanted me to run his household. And he replied, "I want to be a guest at a small, exclusive hotel. I don't want to know about the electricity bill or where the toilet paper is. I just want you to do the whole thing and I'll live there." The difference was, perhaps, that Rinpoche wanted to know about all the details, but at the same time he was our guest.*

*During this time Lady Diana, Rinpoche's wife, was in California pursuing her dressage riding and therefore was not involved in a direct way with the 7th and Aurora Court. I think it's important here to mention something about Diana's role in*

*Rinpoche's life from my own point of view. I have never met anyone else that I thought might be able to fulfill the duties and devotion that were required by a wife of Trungpa Rinpoche. She was the only one. I personally have no idea what expectations she might have had in becoming Rinpoche's wife. Perhaps there were none. But then even small flickers of expectation might have existed. Whatever they were, they were exposed, and by her transcended. To say that living with Rinpoche was inconvenient would be a completely British understatement. Living with Rinpoche was totally inconvenient. But Diana's devotion, love, and faith in Rinpoche completely overcame whatever obstacles her mind created. I have not in this narrative mentioned her to any great degree. That is because I know she has her own story, which will be far more interesting than anything that I might write. Perhaps I might say that Rinpoche felt complete and total trust in and devotion to her as his wife and as the Empress in the Kalapa Court mandala.*

*Chapter 8*

# Dreaming Reality

He took my hand in his and said, "You are the best person who creates your confusion into productivity, into destruction. Wouldn't you say that?" I was stunned. Then he continued, "You've taught me a lot. I regard you as teacher. This is not the end, but the beginning of something. At the same time we all owe you so much."

—*The Kalapa Court,* January 10, 1982

Sometime during the day or night I awoke in a state of panic. My heart was pounding and I began to hyperventilate and gasp for air. I rushed to the toilet and vomited up the half case of red wine consumed the night before and other indescribable objects. I felt like living death. Crawling back to bed I fell asleep immediately. Dream, reality, hallucination merged into one.

There is a house, painted blue, three stories high, on a hillside overlooking a river with a green forest beyond. Trungpa Rinpoche, Khyentse Rinpoche, and His Holiness the Karmapa are arranging symbols on the floor of one of the rooms. They ask me if I can read them. Some seem familiar, but I realize I won't be able to read them using words. These symbols can only be read

with some type of inexpressible intuition and even then cannot be pronounced verbally. This realization makes me very anxious and Rinpoche tells the others, "He's freaking out again." A radiant green light fills the room.

I am lying on my back in moorland. I can hear the insects and birds busy in the gorse and the heather. The sky is brilliant blue with occasional small, white, puffy clouds. The full sun illuminates the whole countryside. Sitting on a central mound of soft moss and small flowers are three figures. I recognize one as the Indian yogini Laksminkara. Her brown sensuous form shows through the rainbow silk robes. She has golden bands around her wrists and anklets around her ankles. Her eyes are deep brown and her jet black hair is done up in a topknot. She smells of heavy jasmine.

Sitting very close to her, wearing purple robes embroidered with golden Celtic designs, is the Goddess Brigid. Her skin is brilliant white, like porcelain, her eyes are blue, and her black hair hangs loosely down to her waist. She smells of tulips, heather, and wet earth. Both women turn their eyes toward me and smile. There is some kind of recognition, but of what I don't know.

Then I notice that below them, resting in the long, warm grass, is a large white cow with red ears. Her eyes are closed, showing long lashes. Her udder is full of milk and she is chewing slowly on her cud and resting contentedly. A warm wind blows gently across the landscape, playing amongst the beings on the moss knoll. It wafts across me, drifting around my body. I can smell, hear, see, and feel the vision in front of me, and my being fills with joy. The cow transforms and turns into the deity Cernunnos. He is young, sixteen, with the velvet horns of a stag upon his head. He says, "Realize constant, intuitive, mystical experience." He repeats slowly, "Constant, intuitive, mystical experience." Laksminkara speaks: "When you look for mind there is no mind, its essence is emptiness. When you look for mind and emptiness, duality becomes self-liberated." Then Brigid adds, "May you realize the clear nature of mind, which is Buddha."

"Do you remember that?" they ask me, looking at me curiously.

Time seems to stop in expectation, waiting for an answer. My nauseated mind struggles to answer. And then the whole vision fades and is replaced in an instant by a small island in the vastness of a great blue lake. I seem to be floating in the air, translucent and light like a feather. Below, the island is covered with an abundance of wildflowers and fruit trees. Two human figures appear sitting in the summer grass. To the right I recognize Cartimandua, Chieftainess of the North British people. She is tall and fair, with blue eyes and long, braided red hair. Cartimandua is regal in her purple robes, golden twisted neck ring, and golden wrist cuffs. She has the bearing of a true empress.

On her left is seated the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin. She has loosely draped white robes and wears a necklace and crown. Her black hair is in a topknot. Leaning on one arm with her other arm draped across a bent knee, Kuan-yin is seated next to a small willow tree. Above the clear lake, dragonflies with transparent wings play across the surface of the water. A large, silver-pink fish swims idly, now and then leaping from the water and creating a splash on the calm surface.

I am engulfed in a cloud of dragonflies. Their translucent wings beat upon my body like the hands of many lovers. They have the eyes of Avalokiteśvara. All of my hair pores become mirrors of the great void. My I-ness goes endlessly, constantly displaying only radiant compassion as it disintegrates.

The voice of Trungpa Rinpoche brings me back with the question, "Well?"

In irritation, I'm about to say, "Well, what?" when behind me out of a great white light arises a huge, meteoric iron mountain. Wild animals of all kinds, along with multitudes of demons, roam around its base. Trapped and unable to climb, they just howl and snarl and fight constantly amongst themselves. I am filled with a sense of fear. Then on the mountain peak dances Machig Labdron. Dressed in the skins of demons and wild animals, she holds a hand drum and a thighbone trumpet. She is

completely terrifying, capable of striking fear into anyone attached to an illusion of any kind.

Next to her is the Morrigan, the great Phantom Queen. She has the power of prophecy and she can also change herself in an instant from a beautiful maiden to a hag. She is dancing also. Around them circles a flock of crows, cawing loudly in alarm. In the sky, thunder and lightning punctuate the scene with sound and flash. The figures are dancing and sing loudly above the din the song of Machig Labdron:[28]

*Attachment to any phenomenon whatsoever,*
*From coarse form to omniscience,*
*Should be understood as the play of a demon.*
*Form is neither white, red, blue, nor green.*
*Form is devoid of presence,*
*Devoid of appearance,*
*Devoid of cessation.*
*All phenomena are equanimity.*
*The perfection of wisdom herself is equanimity.*
*When you are meditating on non-dual Paramita*
*The local gods and demons cannot stand it,*
*And in despair cause magical interference of all kinds,*
*Real, imaginary, or in dreams.*
*Recognize them as the miraculous display of your own mind.*
*Do not concentrate your awareness on these obstacles.*
*Remain at ease, serene in the very nature of this recognition.*
*When you are absorbed in a natural serene state*
*These miraculous displays will be naturally pacified,*
*And once appeased in the essence of phenomena*
*They will appear as friendly to you.*

As the vision dream shifts, Rinpoche's voice sounds in my ear, "No hope for you."

---

28 *Machig Labdrön and the Foundations of Chöd,* Jérôme Edou, Snow Lion Publicatins, 1996, p.162.

I am bathed in an intense yellow light. From it all around arises a tropical rainforest, alive with beings singing, humming, and calling. Myriad flowers of all shapes and colors hang on vines and grow out of trees or the earth. On a small mound illuminated by shafts of yellow light sits Marguerite Porete, the Christian Beguine teacher. "How did I know her?" I ask myself, but can not answer. I see she is dressed in the habit of a Christian renunciate and holds a mirror in one hand and a Christian cross in the other. I feel very connected to her but I don't know why.

Then I see next to her Danu, the Goddess, smiling broadly at me. We are so familiar, she and I. Her eyes of hazel with flecks of green and gold fix on mine. I notice her teeth are very white. She is completely nude and is full-figured with large breasts. Her areolas are prominent with succulent nipples. Her skin is shining mahogany and her long black hair falls in a braid down her ample back. She has massive hands with long, webbed fingers and ivory nails. In the ferns around these women scampers a small dog. It ceases its play now and then and jumps on one, then the other, of the two women to be fondled and petted. Together, they sing to me from the lotus sutra:

*All Buddhas with bodies of a golden hue,*
*Splendidly adorned with a hundred auspicious marks*
*Hear the Dharma and expound it for others.*
*Such is the fine dream that ever occurs.*
*In the dream you are made Empress, or Emperor.*
*Then forsake that palace and household entourage*
*Along with the utmost satisfaction of the five sense desires,*
*And travel to the site of practice under the Bodhi tree.*
*On the lion's seat, in search of the way,*
*After seven days you attain the wisdom of all the Buddhas*
*Completing the unsurpassable way.*
*Arising and turning the Dharma Wheel*
*You expound the Dharma for the four groups of practitioners*
*Throughout thousands of millions of Kalpas*

*Expressing the wondrous Dharma free of flaws*
*And liberating innumerable sentient beings.*
*Finally, you enter Paranirvana,*
*Like smoke dispersing as a lamp is extinguished.*
*If later, in the samsaric world, one expounds this foremost dharma,*
*One will produce great benefit like the merit just described.*
*That is the dream within a dream.*

In the roar of a tornado all the visions and all the inhabitants dissolve into brilliant copper color, green, blue, white, and yellow. The colors form a rainbow that whirls about me in a clockwise direction. A brilliant red light appears in front of me, joining with all the colors in a swirling rainbow as large as myself. It crackles with electricity and serpent tongues of fire.

Then, in a flash, it forms a deity. She has bright, deep green eyes and crimson, flowing, wild hair. She is nude and her skin is light spun gold. She is translucent.

A strong, almost overpowering hypnotic smell of flowers, like hyacinth or honeysuckle or lilac, fills my nostrils. She is surrounded by flames and smoke, rather like the Cosmic Fire. Her arms are now draped about my neck and her legs entwine my waist. She has no weight but I can feel slight energy where she touches me. With great intensity she looks directly into my eyes. I hear the chanting sounds of the familiar Heart Sutra:

OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA

("Go, go, go beyond, go totally beyond, be rooted in the ground of enlightenment.")[29]

---

[29] The Dalai Lama explains, "We can interpret this mantra metaphorically to read, 'Go to the other shore,' which is to say, abandon this shore of samsara, unenlightened existence, which has been our home since beginningless time, and cross to the other shore to final nirvana and complete liberation." © Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, 2002. Reprinted from *Essence of the Heart Sutra: The Dalai Lama's Heart of Wisdom Teachings,* with permission of Wisdom Publications, 199 Elm Street, Somerville, MA 02144 U.S.A., www.wisdompubs.org.

The sounds of the mantra reverberate in my mind over and over and over again. The gold skin of the deity begins to blaze with the intensity of the mantra's resonance. The five colors begin to swirl in the deity's heart center. The illusion disintegrates into my whole body and my mind which have become one. The swirling wheel of colors then streams into my heart. Bliss and joy arise. I hear the words from a song of Machig Labdrön:

> *The roots of anxiety are embedded in the delusion*
> *That every one of us is an island unto ourselves,*
> *Alone and separate from each other.*
> *If you would be free of this suffering*
> *See the workings of your mind as but a single thought—*
> *A retinue of Goddesses that vanish into the sound "AH"*
> *As the rainbow vanishes into the heavens*
> *All enlightened beings past, present, and future*
> *Have but a single essence.*
> *To intuit this essence, learn the true nature of your own mind.*
> *Then, let go and dissolve into unstructured reality—*
> *This tensionless state is the yogin's life.*

"Wake up now, Johnny," says Rinpoche gently.

Still in the dream I awoke, and hearing sounds, made my way to the kitchen. Shari was preparing Rinpoche's breakfast. I focused my eyes on the kitchen clock, which gradually registered in my thought as 4 o'clock. Glancing then to the outdoors I ascertained it was afternoon. Shari had the radio on and the words came out with the music. It sounded like The Beach Boys. The words floated in the air . . . *a girl in an Eastern dress wanting rescue for old time's sake. Her heart was breaking. could somebody throw her a lifeline . . .*

I turned to walk out into the garden when the space abruptly became very solid. My glasses broke as my face hit the unopened patio door. Shari turned around from her cooking.

"Hey, John, are you okay?" What's John? I thought. The music continued. *Now I'm adrift in the China Sea.*

Something managed to organize Rinpoche's breakfast tray and something managed to tape together the broken glasses and also managed to ascend the stairs to Rinpoche's bedroom. I set the tray down next to the bed and looked at him. Our eyes met and the space between us seemed to grow small and then large. My mind reeled with the words "somewhere near Japan."

"Are you okay, Major?" softly inquired the Prince.

I struggled to put things together into a coherent statement and then blurted out, "I have absolutely no idea."

He looked at me intently and said, "Maybe you should become a teacher."

And at last finding solid ground, I muttered to myself, "What the fuck is that supposed to mean?" He continued to look at me, waiting.

"Well, I don't know anything," I responded finally. "How could I be a teacher?"

"On the spot," came the reply.

"What is that?" I asked.

"Unborn," came the answer.

"Unborn? Unborn?" I struggled to make meaning out of the words. "That does not make any sense," I said.

"Exactly," came back to me.

Up to this point neither one of us had actually spoken a word. It was just a quick series of flashes.

Then Rinpoche said, out loud, "Exactly."

Everything fell away into the seeming reality of the room. I looked past his head into the window and the street beyond. It had started to rain. I came back again to his face. He said again, "Exactly."

I waited. Nothing happened. He reached for his teacup. I reached for the teapot and feeling the weight in my hand I poured the tea into the waiting cup. Our eyes met and when he smiled I felt my body warm up with the radiation.

After his death, years later, I visit Rinpoche near Gantock. He is staying in a house with tall arches, aglow from inside with a yellow light. He is dressed only in a translucent gold shawl draped across his shoulders. He has many attendants. I prostrate and touch his feet. He says he is happy to see me and asks if I need anything. I reply that at this time in my life I am continuing to join with the energies that arise. "That's good," he says. Turning to his companion he asks if she has any advice for me. She answers, "He has such a wonderful voice. He should use it more often." I thank them both and receive the radiating warmth of their smiles. The now-ness quality of the situation is transparently real.

*Chapter 8*

# Commentary

*I completed my ngöndro practice by doing Guru Yoga—one million recitations of a three-syllable mantra—whereupon, with a group of students, I took Vajrayogini Abhisheka given by Trungpa Rinpoche. This empowered me to do the Vajrayogini Sadhana.*

*I had begun to realize that there was little or no difference between my dreaming state and my so-called awake state during daylight hours. This created a certain amount of confusion in which I had difficulty in returning to old and safe images of myself. I also began to question my reality as a male or female or, for that matter, my reality as anything at all.*

*In the act of making love with someone I was unsure as to who was making love to whom and began to think of the whole thing as some sort of mutual dance of energies, sometimes tender, sometimes fierce. The passion of my partner stayed with me for a long time after our lovemaking. Lovemaking seems to be an inadequate word. It was much more primordial than that. While the understanding seemed to come and go at that time, it was more like the ocean crashing against the shore, pulling back on the sand, returning, and doing it again, foaming, salty, hot, steamy, sweaty, sensuous, open, union of mutual surrender. That is what I longed for, but this brought up the*

*question of whether there was the "other" or whether it was always continually all me.*

*I could not identify myself in that situation as being solidly male or solidly female. I consciously practiced both of what I considered a male position or attitude in lovemaking and a female attitude—which at that time meant the male was aggressive and the female submissive. Aggressive in my mind meant active and submissive meant openness. I longed for the union of opposites, like positive and negative energies joining while my body longed for union. I longed to surrender totally, to give up totally to my I-ness, give it away, dissolve it as I transformed myself into the deity.*

*I also was beginning to question what the words "human being" meant. That is to say, why did I see myself as being a human being? What was "human being" in relationship to other entities or beings and how was that whole pattern activated in its interdependency? I began to feel that I was a multitude of basic energies. I began to feel that humans were innately sensitive and that they covered up the openness of their sensitivity by various methods to avoid feeling pain. I experienced overwhelming sadness for myself and others. At the same time I had intense feelings of love without object.*

*I began to realize, without panicking, that Rinpoche's mind and my mind were somehow mixing. I experienced him speaking to me or forming words in my mind without verbally saying them. They just appeared, as it were, somewhat intermixed with short verbal confirmations.*

*The deities that appeared in my dreaming-waking state were all feminine. This was due, I think, to my relationship with Vajrayogini. The essence of what was related in this state was closest to the songs that I have included, but it did not appear in these written forms. I added these later to match the essence.*

*The world of duality was becoming infinitely less solid. When that happened, my mind sought refuge in confusion. The action was back and forth but I was able to stay with the situations as they presented themselves for longer periods of time. I developed the obstacle of being attracted to exotic illusions which were not fantasy but actual*

*visions. The obstacle was that I wanted to stay in that state because it was pleasurable. I was attracted to the nirvanic aspect. But this was a stage which one could call the dance of the dakini, where one was introduced to the world that one had not seen before. I began to realize that I was not walking on the path but that the path was moving under my feet. The idea of giving up enlightenment for the sake of all beings was just a phrase that I had heard but had no experience of yet.*

*I had not particularly thought of myself as Celtic. Rinpoche kept bringing this up, and of course, in my predictable way, I was bewildered by his suggestions that I was Celtic and labeled it with my usual response as being crazy. In the visionary displays, something was activated that was definitely Celtic in origin. I began to investigate, somewhat timidly, that Celticness, and of course was horrified by the fact that the warriors cut off each other's heads and tied them to their horses' saddles. This brought up an interesting dilemma. Where was my mind—in my head or in my heart . . . or for that matter outside of me completely? I had form, I had emptiness, but I did not have "form is emptiness, emptiness also is form, emptiness is no other than form, form is no other than emptiness."*

*"Interestingly, Johnny doesn't know anything," he said, "but alot. Contradictory wisdom of Johnny is a lot and little. I would like to express my complete Tibetan dedication and devotion as much as he is devoted to me. I am devoted to him as my best savior in America." He raised his glass and toasted, "To Johnny the Savior."*

*The ship of enlightenment was victorioous over the troops of Mara, I thought.*

*Chapter 9*

# Images

Out of the void a divine couple sits on my head copulating, with the heart of universal empty conception. It enters my body and I fall in love with a lamppost.

"Making love to humans is like fucking pigs and chickens," said Rinpoche. "Until you have made love to the deity, your experience will remain the same." I looked across at the painting of Vajrayogini. Well, she looks pretty pissed off to me, I thought. Besides, she's utterly shameless. The only one I know who even seems like that is Sara Coleman, but she's always crying these days because you, Rinpoche, are dying and her husband has run off with another woman.

"His Holiness, Karmapa, is not well. You should go and see him, Johnny," said Rinpoche, breaking into my inner discussion on sex. "Find him a white bird. That would be very auspicious."

"You mean a canary?" I inquired.

"Yes," he said slowly. I called canary breeders in Denver and located a white canary, a singing male, which I took to Marpa House where His Holiness Karmapa was staying. To my surprise, the monks ushered me into His Holiness's sitting room. He was

sitting on the floor writing on a small table. He looked up and smiled as I entered. Before I could do my customary prostrations he waved me to sit opposite him at the table. I settled cross-legged on a cushion offered by his attending monk.

"I hope so," he said to me in his limited English. Then for the next hour he talked to me in Tibetan. I had no idea what he was saying, but I became mesmerized by the sound of his voice. For a while he held my hand. At the end of our time together he patted me on the head and said, "I hope so." I left him with the white bird and walked back to the Court, falling in love with leaf-waving aspen trees. A dragonfly landed on my arm, rode for a while, then flew off into the warm blue space.

"What did His Holiness say?" asked Rinpoche upon my return.

"I've no idea," I replied laughing.

"His Holiness said you had a good exchange," said Rinpoche.

I was going to ask if they had conversed by phone, but I knew it was pointless to relate on that level. I heard the Shambhala flag flapping in the Court garden. I stopped asking "What the fuck is that supposed to mean?"

The problem with meeting a Mahāsiddha is one of reference point, which does not exist. And you are not aware of that. You are doing your thing, being John Perks, Susie Smith, Billy Burns, Ella-Mae Gray, whomever. A Mahāsiddha dances out of no reference point. There is no way to deal with that because there is no deal. Rinpoche would sit in a talk and yell "Fuck you!" And we were like the person in the film *Life of Brian* who asked Brian, "How do you mean, 'Fuck you'?" While you are doing that, you are still caught up in your "fucking" reference point. The Mahāsiddha cuts you down at every turn. That is why you freak out. Nobody wants to deal with the real quality of emptiness, because there is not even "quality."

We were in Boston, where Rinpoche had finished a teaching weekend on Tilopa. Our plane to Denver was leaving at 10:20 a.m. I was frantically trying to get everything packed and in order. I

had gotten Rinpoche dressed in one of his Savile Row suits and seated in a chair with his glass of sake. We needed to leave for the airport at about 9 a.m. We dragged all the bags and trunks to the hall and I glanced at the clock; it was ten to nine. I bounded up the stairs to get Rinpoche, but when I reached the bedroom floor his chair was empty. I checked the bathroom, the closets, the other bedrooms—no Rinpoche. I leaned over the banister and yelled down to the guards in the hall, "Has anyone seen Lord Mukpo?"

Andy, one of the Boston Kusung,[30] came up the stairs and whispered to me, "Ella and Sue took him into the back bedroom."

"Oh, Lord!" I exclaimed, and ran down the hall to the back bedroom where I discreetly knocked on the door.

Rinpoche's high-pitched voice said, "Come in." I opened the door. All three of them were in the bed naked. Ella was clutching his penis and guiding it into her as she moved up and down. Sue was straddling Rinpoche's neck and pushing his head into her curly mound of black pubic hair. Her bottom wiggled in seeming delight.

I stood there frozen and somewhat amazed. I was completely at a loss. Suddenly, I remembered the airport and our impending flight.

"Sir, are you coming?"

Rinpoche managed to free his mouth to say, "Any moment, Johnny. Any moment now."

We all laughed and a question flashed into my mind. "Did the Buddha eat pussy?" Well, he always had that smile on his face. Perhaps, I thought.

"Is Rinpoche coming?" a guard hollered from downstairs. "Oh yes, yes." I walked downstairs and a moment later the girls pulled a disheveled and laughing Rinpoche down to where we were waiting. We kissed goodbye, hugged, and bundled Rinpoche into the

---

[30] Buddhist military attendants (Bodhisattvas) in Shambhala training.

waiting car. As we pulled out, students were waving or holding their hands together in the Buddhist anjali,[31] with bowed heads.

Did the Buddha eat pussy? I wondered to myself again.

I poured Rinpoche a glass of sake. He was seated between Sue and Ella. They were all holding hands and smiling. Rinpoche waved to the crowd of students and hummed, "Plop, plop, fizz, fizz. Oh what a relief it is." There was an air of pain and gentleness in the car—the gentleness of being in love and the pain of parting, all mingled with the smell of sex, wet hair, and sake. I was overwhelmed by a feeling. I felt totally in love with anything and everything. A mental image of Tilopa eating fish heads entered my thoughts and I wondered again, Does Buddha eat pussy?

I, myself, had practiced eating vaginas by sucking on cans of sardines. Somehow vaginas were more sophisticated than sardines. It's really difficult to describe the individual taste or mustiness or wetness because you're dealing with a live entity on the end of your tongue, which is very electric.

Rinpoche looked at me inquiringly and said, "Major, are you okay?"

"Yes, Sir," I replied, snapping back to my organizational role. I ran through a mental list to be sure I hadn't forgotten anything.

"Great," Rinpoche said. "Then let's sing the Shambhala anthem." We sang to the tune of "Let Erin Remember" while dragons thundered in the sky around us.

The vagina is the gateway into the human realm. We are all born with the taste of our mother's vaginal juice in our mouths. Unless, of course, you are Caesarian, an interesting name! Sex is such a primordial act. It is so powerful, the joining of two to make a third, or just experiencing the act. Rinpoche says it's like death—apart from sneezing, the only other time we experience death is at orgasm. Try keeping eye contact with your partner up to and through orgasm. It's an interesting experience.

---

[31] A greeting with palms of the hands pressed together.

Something is very wrong. Millions of human beings and other beings are copulating right now. But everywhere people are pretending that it isn't happening. What is the secret that we are all keeping from each other? Is copulation the ultimate spirituality—even beyond such an idea of spirituality—or is it just an event, totally in tune with the cosmos, in which ideas of anything don't exist in any form?

I look out of the car window and in its sun-reflected transparency I see my mother and father copulating—making love to produce me. They are locked in passion like two frogs. Am I in the spirit world looking on? I have a great feeling of compassion for my parents' copulation, for their mutual passion, their willingness to share passion, their willingness to feel what we all experience, ordinary, extraordinary, known, but unknown as to its source or origin, beyond conceptualization. But at the same time, conception occurs. "Thank you so much," I whisper to the reflection and it disappears into the sunlight and Boston streets. We all have that connection.

So I have answered my question. "Yes, of course, the Buddha ate pussy all the time." When he spoke it was from the ground, the ground of the compassionate vagina willing to give birth, willing to nurture, willing to be totally open, willing to be totally invitingly wet, constantly, willing to be Rinpoche.

We pulled into the airport with plenty of time to spare. I had no idea how this was possible.

For the Dorje Kasung, who are the Vajra guards, Rinpoche has made the "eight slogans," which they keep in small pocket-size books, like the pocket books of the Red Guard of Mao Tse Tung. However, these are more revolutionary than the Red Guards', or, for that matter, more revolutionary than the *Art of War*.[32] Rinpoche's motto is "Victory over war."

Number one slogan is "Have confidence to go beyond hesitation."

---

[32] *Art of War*, Sun Tzu, Oxford University Press, 1963.

We were all very concerned with Rinpoche's health and at one point Doctor Mike said we should find a way to cut down on Rinpoche's sake drinking. To my surprise, and Mike's relief, Rinpoche was cooperative. It was suggested that we remove the alcohol from the sake by means of boiling. This went on for some weeks with attendants and servants boiling gallons of sake in the Court kitchen and rebottling the finished product for Rinpoche's consumption.

Now, in Rinpoche's sitting room there was a service closet with a refrigerator, glasses, and trays. It had a curtain across the doorway operated by a pull string. I went upstairs to the sitting room with a new batch of boiled sake. I crossed to the closet and pulled the cord. The curtain opened to reveal a naked Rinpoche with a bottle of real sake at his lips. He just said, "Whoops!" I wordlessly closed the curtain and left him chuckling in the closet.

Number two slogan is "Alert before you daydream."

One evening, about nine, I went to Rinpoche's bedroom. He was lying on the bed in his kimono groaning softly. "Sir, are you ill?" I asked.

"I don't feel well, Johnny," he murmured.

"What are your symptoms, Sir?" I asked.

"Well, I have this tight pain in my chest and pain in my arm. I also feel like I might have to throw up."

I did not have to hear any more. "Call Dr. Mike," I yelled down to the guard. I felt for Rinpoche's pulse, which was hard to find. "Sir, I think we should go to the hospital."

"It seems to have gone now. I feel fine," Rinpoche said, sitting up. He walked to the sitting room unaided and sat in his chair. "Pour me some sake, Johnny." I started to protest. He smiled and said, "No, no. It was just something I ate. I'm fine, don't worry."

I gave him his sake in the stemmed crystal glass and heard Dr. Mike come bounding up the stairs. He burst into the room, looked at Rinpoche and then at me, and asked what happened. I explained briefly and related what Rinpoche had told me. Mike went down on his knees next to Rinpoche. "Sir," he said softly, "how are you?"

He took out his stethoscope and blood pressure cuff. We took off Rinpoche's kimono and Mike listened to his heart and took his blood pressure. Rinpoche was so quiet and docile. I was beginning to think he might really be ill. Mike made a call and sent for an EKG machine. After it arrived, Mike attached the electrodes to Rinpoche and ran several test tapes. He studied them intently. He sent for a magnifying glass and studied them again. He rose from the table where he had been working. I could see the concern on his face as he turned to Rinpoche and said, "Sir, I think we should take you to the hospital. How are you feeling now?"

"My stomach feels upset and I have a pain in my chest and down my arm," came the reply.

Mike pulled me aside. "I'm going to call the emergency room. Get the car around front." He turned back to Rinpoche.

"Sir, we have to take you to the hospital. Your heart has an irregular rhythm on the EKG tape."

"Oh?" said Rinpoche. "How interesting."

Greatly concerned, we rushed Rinpoche to the emergency room, where he was placed on a gurney. Dr. Shelley, Rinpoche's former doctor, had been sent for, and she arrived shortly. Mike met her at the door with the EKG tapes in his hand. I heard them talking and then noticed her voice rise a little louder. "Well, Mike, didn't you know that Rinpoche has a normal skip in his EKG trace?" Mike stood there frozen to the spot.

Dr. Shelley came over to Rinpoche lying on the gurney. "Hello, Rinpoche, how do you feel?"

"Fine," he replied. "But I have an upset stomach."

"Any pains in the chest, neck, or arms?" she asked.

"No," said the innocent Rinpoche. She looked suspiciously at the stunned, open-mouthed Dr. Mike.

Rinpoche was given some Pepto-Bismol and sent home to his waiting glass of sake. Mike threw his hands in the air and exclaimed, "I can never show my face in that hospital again!"

Rinpoche the Trickster is what the Regent called him. All of Rinpoche's tricks carried with them the message "Wake up! Pay

attention!" One particular trick he would do that freaked me out was to run his tongue down the edge of a razor-sharp samurai sword. Not only that, but his tongue would actually curl over the edge. It gave me shivers. Rinpoche would say, "You see, Johnny, you do it, but you don't do it."

Number three slogan is "Mindful of all details. Be resourceful in performing your duties."

While walking down a street in San Francisco, we passed a strip joint. Rinpoche insisted that we go in. It had theater-type seats with a small circular stage and colored strobe lights flashing. Two girls with G-strings were doing the bump-and-grind to loud rock music. We had been sitting there for perhaps only five minutes when one of the girls gave a scream and shouted, "Rinpoche! Rinpoche! I took Level One Shambhala Training!" She jumped off the stage and ran over to Rinpoche and plopped herself onto his lap. Rinpoche was delighted and cordially greeted the other girls as they came over to be introduced. The other patrons didn't seem to mind the disruption of the stage show. Perhaps they thought it was part of the act.

Number four slogan is "Fearless beyond idiot compassion."

During that same visit to San Francisco I pointed out to Rinpoche that there were visiting British warships in the harbor.

"Great," said Rinpoche excitedly. "Let's put on our uniforms and visit them, Major. Call them and say the Prince of Bhutan and his party would like to tour the vessel."

"Oh, God," I thought, "We'll all end up in jail."

When we were all dressed in our khaki cotton uniforms with Sam Brown belts and Shambhala medals, we actually looked quite authentic in our smartly tailored Gieves and Hawkes naval uniforms. We ordered two taxis and drove off to the docks. When we arrived at the end of the pier I could see at the gates a large crowd carrying placards. They were cordoned off by police and U.S. Naval Shore patrol. I wanted to turn back from the mayhem but Rinpoche would have none of it. We pulled up to the shout-

ing, shoving, screaming crowd, where we could read the signs that said "Get Out of Ireland."

With Rinpoche leading the way, we got out of the cabs. The crowd looked at us and grew silent. They parted before us as we made our way toward the boat. The gate was opened and we walked through. No one asked any questions. As we went up the gangplank we were greeted by the cheery sound of the boatswain's pipes. We saluted in return. Rinpoche presented a traditional white scarf to the officer of the watch. The British naval personnel were very polite and showed us around the three war ships with Rinpoche asking questions about armament, engine speeds, crew comforts, and pay scales.

Next he'll want us to buy one of the damn things, I thought. As we left, I noted the name of the first ship we had boarded. It was called the *Sheffield.* Years later, in the Falkland war, it took a direct hit from an Exocet missile.

Number five slogan is "Warrior without anger."

Another time in California we were standing on a large cliff overlooking the ocean. We were dressed in our naval uniforms. A large, rolling, drunken Indian arrived. He asked for a handout, which someone gave him. Then he spotted Rinpoche.

"What are you doing with these white men?" he slurred. "Come on, brother, I want to talk to you." He put his arm around Rinpoche and started to tell him about the glories of the earth and the harmony with nature. Rinpoche didn't seem to mind, but we wanted to get rid of this guy. He was dirty, stunk of cheap whiskey, and was starting to get belligerent, pushing us away as we tried to reclaim Rinpoche. Luckily, his girlfriend showed up and coaxed him away so we could escape with Rinpoche back to our cars.

Driving back, we were congratulating ourselves on how we managed to get away from this guy and his drunken violence. Then Rinpoche, who had been silent through all this, said to me, "You know, Johnny, that Indian reminded me of you when we

first met." I was shocked, and it wasn't until much later that I could mentally entertain our similarity.

Number six slogan is "Not afraid to be a fool."

We went into Mexico. Rinpoche was writing *The Shambhala Kingdom Epics.* "Let's put on our uniforms and go to the pyramids," he said. "Bring some wood, Johnny."

Up we climbed to the local pyramid ruins. Rinpoche lit a fire, put on the evergreen boughs, and did a Lasung ceremony. As we all chanted, the sky turned black. The thunder and lightning crashed around us and the downpour splattered red earth up on my uniform. The wind shrieked and, despite the rain, the fire flamed higher. It was like the rain was gasoline. Afterwards, we slipped and fell down the mountain. What a great war, I thought. We were bloodied by the elements. We carried the drunken Rinpoche home, down the blood-red mountain with the firestorm raging, pierced through with rainbow colors.

Barnstone was waiting with a pulque, a milk-white drink made by the Indians out of cactus.

"Want to go to a real whore house?" he asked. We jumped into the car and drove back up the same mountain. In the steaming heat, he pulled up to a cinder block building with a bar outside. The rooms inside were square with iron beds and a plain light bulb hanging down. The bathroom door was open and a woman in a greasy blue dress was sitting on the toilet pissing. Another woman with a short brown dress approached us. She had stringy black hair and amber eyes. She smiled. I could taste the blood-red earth. She smiled at me and said something in Spanish.

Barnstone translated, "She says, 'Do you want to fuck?'"

I was so shocked by the whole situation I almost fainted. I turned around and staggered toward the open door and vomited alcoholic cactus juice against the wall. An Indian wrapped in a shawl next to the building offered me something. I looked closely and saw it was a large green lizard.

"They are good to eat," said Barnstone.

I looked around to try to find some bearings. Where am I? Who am I? The most shocking thing was that this was all somehow so familiar.

We went to a bullfight, all of us in our uniforms. I was in naval white. We were seated in the balcony watching the show. In this particular bullfight the bull did not get killed. The crowd of people around us began looking over and whispering, and then somebody threw an apple core in our direction. Other missiles flew through the air—bags, Dixie cups, whatever they picked up. We collected Rinpoche and moved quickly up toward the exit and down the cement steps. Five or six Indians ran down after us. I turned to face them. The fellow in front looked at me, freaked out, turned around, and ran back up the steps. The others remained frozen. I had no explanation for their reaction, except that perhaps I looked like someone else, someone they recognized. Twice I made trips with Rinpoche to central Mexico and each time I was freaked out, not by the strangeness but by the familiarity. It was like living in a constant deja-vu.

I am in the bathroom with Rinpoche. We are both looking into the mirror. Our images are distorted into rainbow colors. Then there is only blue.

"How do you do that?" I ask.

"You just do it," he says.

Number seven slogan is "Invisible heavy hand."

The translucent couple is copulating on my head. From their heart centers glowing fluid runs down into their vagina and penis union, mixing. The fluid runs into the top of my head, washes into my whole body, flushing out all of my clingings, uptightness, pissed-off-ness, depression, anger, and jealousy, turning the blackness into light. I can't believe they care about me.

The fact is they don't care about Me. They care about Non-Me, if you could call it "care." They have the energy of a newly born star, primordial care without pre-intention. It's so frustrating because I am so ME. How could I become non-me? It's taken

all these years to build me, all the protection and strategies. I have to keep me safe, me, me, me. I'm sick of me.

I hear Rinpoche saying to a guest, "Do you know Johnny only speaks to me when I'm not thinking?"

I feel like I'm looking into the rear view mirror of a car speeding forward. Where does that statement come from? Where is non-me hiding? I keep feeling like I'm moving forward and backward at the same moment—walking through the door, watching myself move in the space, the ghost shadow of self, trying to keep up with the memory of movement, trying to keep the solidness of me. It's hopeless.

I scrub the kitchen floor to find relief, watching the soap bubbles burst, the air inside escaping into space. I pretend I'm holystoning the deck of a ship, moving a stone the size of a Bible back and forth across the wooden planks. I feel the vessel move beneath my heavy body. I put my hand out to steady myself on the kitchen floor. The constant copulators on my head won't go away. I thought I had left them in the shrine room. Now they keep turning up in my daily and nightly endeavors. We are falling in love. Sometimes I miss them and call them back. Most often they just show up, washing me out, sending me back and forth scrubbing the eternal floor.

Number eight slogan is "Be precise without creating a scene."

Rinpoche was slated to give a talk in the auditorium of a West Coast city. That day he kept complaining about receiving constant radio messages in his head.

"What's it like?" I asked him.

In agony he held his head in his hands. "It's like having twenty different radio stations playing all at once in my head," he answered.

"Would you like an aspirin?" I asked with concern.

He looked at me intently for some time before gently answering, "No, thank you, dear." I felt helpless but I had my own problems with the couple on my head. They had taken to fighting about who should be the consort, him or her. Who's the fucker

and who's the fuckee? I wanted to get them back on track. They were ruining my sex life. "Should I be on top or should she? Who's in control here?"

Dr. Mike and I escorted Rinpoche up the long steps to the Greek-style auditorium. He was moving like a zombie as we took him to the waiting chair on the stage. I repositioned the microphone toward his lips, placed the glass of sake on his side table, and took my seat in the audience. Rinpoche began his talk. His lips moved but no sound came to our ears. The event organizers rushed over to the audio equipment, methodically checking the cords and connections. Rinpoche's lips kept moving, but still no sound. The tech people started to panic, twisting knobs and banging consoles. I went to where Rinpoche was sitting and tapped on the microphone. The tap resounded through the speaker system. I looked down at Rinpoche. His lips were forming words, but there was simply no sound! I signaled over to Dr. Mike and together we carried the silent speaking Rinpoche out of the hall, down the long steps of the Greek theater, and into the waiting limousine, leaving behind a confused and concerned audience. Two miles down the highway Rinpoche's sound returned.

"What happened?" he asked.

An idea began to form and take root in my mind. Rinpoche was not crazy or a trickster at all. His actions seemed like he was simply playing tricks on people. But they all had the effect of making you look at things from a different angle or a different view, which was somewhat frightening and threatening to one's sense of self. He was meticulous and relentless in this catching the self off guard, which created anything from a wobble to an earthquake in the seemingly solid reality of self. I was beginning to feel that I was living in a dream world. Waking and sleeping drifted into one another. The only thing that kept me grounded was Rinpoche's insistence on attention to small details: making tea in the correct sequence, tying his shoelaces the same way every morning, dressing or undressing him in the correct form. My fuzzy, foggy mind still could relate to putting his socks in the bot-

tom drawer of the bureau, his underwear in the next drawer, shirts, then pants, then ties, and finally hats at the top.

A small thing occurred at encampment. Rinpoche, Max, and I had taken a shower together. Rinpoche pointed out to Max that Tibetan penises were bigger than Chinese ones. I dressed Rinpoche after drying him off, then I dressed myself. He looked at me across the room. I looked down at my shirt and saw I had forgotten to button up one button. I did it up and looked back at him and he smiled. We walked together across the field. I was holding his arm. I had the strange feeling we would be and had always been together. "Yes," he said to my thought. I also knew that his thought about the unbuttoned button had been transmitted in a similar fashion. In our talks together we decided to call these instances "messages." At the time it did not seem unusual.

In Woodstock, New York, I escorted Rinpoche to a meeting with about seven other Tibetan lamas. I was seated on a meditation cushion next to Rinpoche's chair. Everyone was speaking in Tibetan. After about an hour Rinpoche looked down at me and said, "Do you know what they are saying?"

"No, Sir," I answered. "You know I don't understand Tibetan."

"Well," Rinpoche explained in English, loudly and distinctly, "they are saying they don't want to give the real teachings to their Western students because then the students will take over."

There was complete silence in the room. I looked around, not meeting any eyes, and responded to Rinpoche. "Well, we don't do that, do we?"

"You bet we don't!" came his reply.

We left soon after that and on the way out I kept a sharp eye out in case I had to whack one of those monkeys. But as usual, everyone was very polite. In the car I asked Rinpoche, "Does that happen very often? Not wanting to give students the real teachings?"

Rinpoche took a sip of sake from a Dixie cup and said, "Quite often."

I realized again how fortunate we all were to be his students and how the dance of the slogans was victory over war.

*Chapter 9*

# Commentary

*In the book* The Practice of Dzogchen by Longchen Rabjam, *translated by Tulku Thondup,*[33] *there is a story of how "Patrul Attained Realization Through the Teacher's Yogic Power."*

> *Sometimes great yogis give the high transmissions such as that of the realization of "Dzogpa Chenpo" through various means and indications, and the disciple who is ready receives the introduction miraculously. There are no logical and intellectual reasonings or ceremonial performances, but just a skillful display of whatever is appropriate. Dodrup Chen Jigmed Tenpa'i Nyima writes about how Patrul Rinpoche was introduced to "Dzogpa Chenpo" realization by Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (1800–?).*
>
> *When Jigmed Yeshe Dorje, the Precious Excellent Incarnation of the Omniscient One (Jigmed Lingpa), was wandering to perform ascetic disciplines, he arrived one day where the Lord Patrul Rinpoche was staying and shouted: "O Palge (Patrul Rinpoche's lineage name)! Are you brave? If*

[33] *The Practice of Dzogchen,* Longchen Rabjam, translated by Tulku Thondop, Snow Lion Publications, 2002, p.129–130.

> *you are, come here!" When Patrul Rinpoche went to him, he held Patrul by the hair, threw him on the ground and dragged him around. After a while, an odor of alcohol was suddenly emitted and Patrul Rinpoche thought: "Oh, he is drunk. Even a great adept like him is capable of this kind of behavior because of his drinking. This is the fault of alcohol as discoursed upon by the Blessed One (Buddha)." At that very moment, Khyentse Yeshe Dorje freed Patrul from his grip and shouted: "Alas! you who are called intellectuals, how could such an evil thought arise (in you)? You old dog." He spat on Patrul's face and showed him his little finger (sign of the worst insult) and then he left. Immediately Patrul realized, "Oh! I have been deluded." It was an introduction. And he resumed the (meditative) posture. (At that moment) Patrul realized the unhindered intrinsic awareness, (clear) like the cloudless sky. The dawn-like (clear) introduction (to the realization) given by Jigmed Gyalwa'i Nyugu had become (bright) like the rising sun. Later on, Patrul Rinpoche would say jokingly, "'Old Dog' is my esoteric name given by Kushog Khyentse."*

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was renowned for his ability to consume large amounts of sake, which we would buy by the magnum bottle. He particularly liked Kiku Masamume brand with the large white chrysanthemum flower on the label. We had a number of Irish Waterford crystal glasses that he used. Generally, he would have a glass after breakfast and then continue throughout the day toward bedtime. At the height of his consumption we would go through three or four magnums of sake in a twelve-hour period.*

*This was more toward the end of his life, whereas when we were on retreat he would drink only in the evening. We were always invited to join him. However, one had to watch one's mind and not lose it in drunkenness. Rinpoche would give explicit instructions on how to drink without becoming confused, inebriated, or falling into*

*sleep, which he also writes about in* The Heart of the Budha.[34] *I, myself, had the tendency to fall asleep. So I developed a method of sitting up straight in the chair to keep myself awake and also staying mindful to filling Rinpoche's glass when it was two-thirds empty. By concentrating on those tasks I was able to consume a relatively large amount of sake without becoming unaware.*

*I had never seen Rinpoche displaying the loss of attention that ordinary people display when they become drunk. And I was quite surprised one evening at a gathering of people when he started to roll around in a drunken stupor. As I half carried him upstairs he was laughing as usual and rolling around the stairs trying to throw me off balance when all of a sudden he stopped, stood up straight—quite normally—and said to me, "Don't worry, I am never drunk." Then he went back to laughing and rolling around.*

*On another similar occasion, when his outrageous actions became of concern to me, he did the same thing. On the way to the bathroom, he stopped and said, "Don't worry, I won't go crazy." And then he resumed his outrageousness. In both these instances, of course, I was concerned and fearful, not for Rinpoche, but for myself. I was actually more concerned that I would lose my reference point. I had thought that I was taking care of him, when actually it was the other way around. He was taking care of me.*

*Rinpoche said, "When the master is more into samsara he can teach more. If he's into non-samsara then he can't teach anymore because he's into a blind kind of other world. Seduction plays a very important part. The master has to be seduced into teaching. Masters are recommended to completely enjoy sense perception, sense pleasure. Any high Maha Ati*[35] *teachers, if they are high Maha Ati*

---

34 Written about in "Alcohol as Medicine or Poison," Chapter 10, *The Heart of the Buddha,* Chögyam Trungpa, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1991, p. 190.

35 "The Ati Yoga Yana—'ati' means 'ultimate' (Tibetan word, dzongpa chenpo); a notion of transcending any philosophy; a sense of openness and a sense of non-caring. Logical reasoning doesn't make any sense at this point. (The experience of final fruition.)" Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's talk, 1973.

*teachers, must be sybaritic. The more sybaritic they are the more love and compassion they have for their students. That's the whole point: they sort of bring themselves down instead of taking off to the whatever."*

*Rinpoche's use of "couldn't care less," which he used constantly in the later years, was the old dog quality of noncaring, which is the style of the Maha Ati path, in which you care but you don't care.*

*It is well known that Trungpa Rinpoche engaged in sexual activity with some of his students. When asked about this by a local reporter from the Boulder, Colorado paper, he replied simply that it was a good way to get to know people. This was on the very ordinary level, where sleeping with students involved no sexual activity, but perhaps talking, making up stories, reading* Tin Tin *or* Asterisk *comic books, and general laughter and play. There were other students who received more advanced Karmamudra instruction, leading to the possible realization of coemergent wisdom. Trungpa Rinpoche was always insistent on using one's passion as part of the path. He was also insistent that it not become diluted into frivolity or lust.*

*Sexual practice between people has become a great problem in Western society. Even more alarmingly, in America it has become associated with violence. The lust and pleasure of sex portrayed in pornography of all kinds is used in the worst materialistic way, degrading human beings below the intelligence of animals or insects. Children are constantly bombarded by the exponents of sex and violence. On the other end of the stick, the haters of love condemn any form of passion as evil. When a person who is a leading justice minister for the society spends a large amount of money to cover the naked breasts of a statue of the goddess, something is very wrong. Ignorance on both sides of the issue perpetuates a war against each other. And the flame of any real enlightenment is extinguished.*

*Before one rushes into any practice of Karmamudra, one has to have a solid basis and understanding of shamatha vipashyana*[36]

[36] Shamatha—dwelling in tranquility; Vipashyana—special insight. Basic Buddhist meditation technique.

*meditation and especially tonglen practice.*[37] *There must be a foundation of compassion firmly fixed within the heart. And one must seek a teacher for such endeavors.*

*Many of us, in search of salvation, peace, love, joy, gratification, or release from pain and suffering, may jump from bed to bed trying to find the ultimate partner, the ultimate "other" who will unite with us and solve all of our problems. I am sad to say, no such partner exists. Even the most gorgeous and magnificent body that you might think of could not do this. But it is possible that the union of two could be realized.*

*On a simple level, one has to see the other from the heart; that is to say, one thinks through the heart. One actually puts one's mind into one's heart. Then one might speak unashamedly with the voice drawn not from one's experience of oneself but from the vision of the other. One pulls into one's heart center the complete aspects of the other and feels the other very directly in all its display. One then generates love and continually sends it out toward the other. If doubt and discord arise because of past or present actions, one uses these as further inspiration to generate love. All beings respond to love. Therefore, the generation of love becomes one's path.*

*We could also consider this story, which is actually a commentary about primordial energy and, as such, is extremely powerful, extremely beneficial, and extremely dangerous, rather like holding nuclear fission in one's hand. When I was a young boy a girl in our primary school, Shirley Way, offered to let the boys see her vagina for various sums of money. I had a pencil sharpener and she agreed to let me see her vagina at the back of the house where the toilets were located by the playground. At playtime in the morning I gave her the pencil sharpener, as arranged, but I was too scared to actually show up for the viewing.*

*When I was a young man, in my teens, I had a job at night repairing restaurant gas stoves in New York City. My two coworkers were African Americans and we would wander through the*

---

37 Tonglen—meditative practice designed to experience compassion for others.

*Manhattan streets at night from restaurant to restaurant repairing gas stoves. Since I was somewhat younger than they, they would tease me about my limited sexual experience. One night one of them said, "Have you ever eaten pussy?" Seeing my shocked surprise, he continued, "I bet you ain't."*

*The other chimed in, "Oh, you have to eat pussy, man. You ain't never gonna get nowhere unless you have your face in it." They continued their dialog of the benefits and wonders of this practice, much to my shock, excitement, and horror, as an attack on my spiritual and moral purity.*

*In my early twenties, I acquired a position as a house manager of an apartment in the West Seventies owned by three business women in their forties. I was to keep the apartment clean, make the beds, do the laundry, and shop and cook for them when they came into town on business. Sometimes they would arrive all together and sometimes separately. Through unmistakable sexual advances, I began to realize that part of the job was also making love to them, which I was inclined to do, even though my manner in the art of lovemaking was somewhat clumsy because of my inexperience and immature passion. That is, I considered only my own sexual gratification.*

*But, gradually, they taught me very patiently how to make love to them, which included sucking their vaginas and clitorises. At first I was somewhat apprehensive and even terrified, but through their gentleness I learned to overcome my fear and I progressed quite well. However, after many months, my spiritual and moral fear arose. I felt ashamed of being like a prostitute, so, in a fit of moral righteousness, I rejected the whole situation and left, which was my habitual reaction to situations in which my personal ego was challenged. For, in order for John Perks to survive as John Perks, the character formation which I had invented, or which had been created out of my experience of good or bad, had to remain in tact.*

*It was not until my contact with Trungpa Rinpoche that I was able to see sexual encounters as being both ordinary and extraordinary, from the primordial point of view. I began to realize with my*

*tongue that the clitoris was as sensitive as my penis, if not more so. I began to realize that the energy was directed into my mouth—first from the stomach becoming like a valley and then expanding into a mountain before rushing in a river of great force into my body. I began to realize that I was dealing with energy that was beyond self-attachment, that it was primal and existed in the universe everywhere; that it did not belong to a self; that it was rather like electricity, which does not have a self; that in order to experience it, self had to be surrendered.*

*Then there was this vision. We were in a prisoner camp, imprisoned by our own conceptual minds. An extremely old man appeared, dressed rather like a native of Tibet. He tried to wake up his son, who was asleep, but he was unable to do this. He explained to me that he had to take the top of a mountain back to the mountain. He held the object in his hands. There were marks on it like it had been chipped away, and it was gold, bronze, or brass and yellow. The top side was in the form of a bowl which was fluid, which meant that when you touched it, it changed shape in ripples although it remained round. One could see quite plainly that it was a living object. He asked me to go with him. Also going with us on the journey were a young girl and a young boy. Rather than taking a path we walked up a river. The girl became nervous of the depth of the water. So the old man placed the bowl in the river, whereupon the river became less deep so the girl could walk more easily. However, that action created many lights in the sky, with thunder and lightning and earthquakes which toppled the front of many churches and temples that we passed. I saw the monks and clergy falling out of the churches and temples.*

*I said, "So this energy is so powerful that it could topple buildings, institutions, and societies?"*

*And he said, "Yes, that's correct."*

*So I said to him, "And the prerequisite for using this energy is that you don't know anything?"*

*And he said, "Yes, that's correct, you know nothing. And from that, self-love arises."*

*I said, "You mean, love of self?"*

*And he said, "No, love of non-self which arises like primordial energy and it exists that way. And that energy can be experienced. It is self-existing—primordial and without end. From it all things are created and all things are destroyed. The primordialness of the energy, which all beings have, is greatly feared and therefore covered up in myth, secret, and ritual. Nevertheless, it can be accessed by those who are fearless enough to seek it."*

*The vision and the story are one. It means all beings have the potential of becoming enlightened or realized! One has to have a fearless approach to working with this energy. Fearlessness means going ahead or going beyond one's own fear, going beyond one's own present realization. One doesn't create the situation; the situation is presented and one just steps into it somehow. It becomes obvious and one can see the expanse. One might withdraw because of fear of that expansion, but then life is such that an opportunity will arise again.*

*One's ideas of spirituality and morality could in themselves become obstacles, from both personal and societal perspectives. Even the Buddha must be transcended. By moving toward the pain, compassion, from which there is no reference point, remains. By experiencing the immense pain of personal open heart surgery, compassion for all beings arises. There is no returning. One becomes a nonreturner. The image of warriorship is your willingness to continue on the path.*

*Chapter 10*

# The Last Journey

Compassion comes and goes in my mind like the sun on a cloudy day. Then it rains and I dissolve into emptiness with an unending yearning heart.

News reached us in the late summer that His Holiness, Karmapa, the lineage holder, was leaving the monastery at Rumtek in Northern India. He was going to a hospital in Hong Kong for exploratory surgery. Liver cancer was suspected. Doctor Mike would go on ahead to the hospital. I was to travel with Rinpoche if and when Mike sent back word that the situation was serious. Several days later Mike called from Hong Kong. I spoke to him briefly.

"Well, it looks like he's dying, Johnny," he said. Feeling uncomfortable discussing His Holiness's death and keeping my British stiff upper lip, I asked about the weather.

"It's damn hot and humid," came the answer from Mike.

"I'll pack summer stuff for Rinpoche and myself," I said.

"Say, Johnny, there are some great-looking girls over here," continued Mike.

"You get laid yet?" I asked.

"No, but I'm staying at this house with some beautiful Philippino and Chinese girls."

"Right, right," I said, enviously picturing Doctor Mike in a steaming house with Asian girls, all naked and fucking. You could send this guy to the Arctic and within twenty-four hours he'd end up with pussy in his bed. "See you in a few days, then." I finished and handed the phone to Rinpoche so he could hear the news firsthand.

"Let's fly Japan Air first class," Rinpoche said to me as I headed off to pack the uniforms, medals, and suits.

This is going to be a great trip, I thought. There will be Japan Airlines first class, the best hotel rooms in Hong Kong, beautiful Asian women, and the great food. Wow! I'll be like a soldier on furlough from the frontline of Rinpoche's unceasing barrages. This time Mike and I will escape from Rinpoche and have a glorious time.

It was decided that Carl, one of the ministers, and Bob, a Kusung at the Court, would also go along. I was glad to have Bob along. He had been with Rinpoche for a long time. He was a wonderful schemer, extremely bright, and a talented man of the world. I knew that I could depend on him, like Mike, to help manage Rinpoche.

We left Boulder amid tears and sadness over the impending death of His Holiness. I was sad and tearful too, but also excited about the exotic trip ahead. We stayed several days in San Francisco before boarding the Japan Air Boeing 747 for the ten-hour flight to Japan, to be followed by the flight to Hong Kong. Rinpoche and I were seated in first class. He wore one of his Savile Row suits and was traveling as the Prince of Bhutan. I was in the uniform of an army major, English style, but with the Shambhala insignia. Mike had given me Rinpoche's medication and some sleeping pills to keep him quiet. As we winged over the Pacific we were served Japanese sushi and lots of sake.

Rinpoche wanted to go to the bathroom and as always I went with him. We both went inside the aircraft bathroom so I could

help him take down his trousers and raise them again after he was done. On returning to our seats Rinpoche loudly demanded my aisle seat and more sake. I became a bit alarmed. I had to get him to sleep before he began sending me to the pilots with messages about meeting with some head of government in Hong Kong. It had happened to me before!

"Time for pills, Sir," I said smoothly, as I handed Rinpoche two sleeping pills. Rinpoche took them easily and swallowed them with a big glass of sake.

"More," he said.

"More sake, Sir?" I asked.

"No. More sleeping pills."

"Well, Sir, Mike said . . ."

"More," he commanded.

I gave him two more, twice the prescribed dose. He flushed them down with the last of the sake.

"Wheee!" exclaimed Rinpoche, as he took the empty sake bottle and threw it down the floor toward the front of the aircraft. It bounced off the feet of the formally attired Japanese stewardess. She came over and I half stood up in the seat.

"Sorry," I said. "The Prince would like some more sake."

The stewardess politely did a half bow and went to get the ordered sake. As she left, Rinpoche moved past me and out into the aisle with remarkable swiftness to the main exit door of the aircraft. I reached him just as he had taken hold of the door handle and was beginning to turn it.

"Sir," I hissed under my breath.

"What do you want?" He looked at me like I was crazy. "Let's go for a walk," he said brightly.

"Sir, Sir!" I exclaimed near panic. "We are at thirty thousand feet over the ocean in an airplane!"

"Oh," he said innocently. "I thought we were at the Court."

As I steered him back to our seats he noticed the stairs leading to the top deck of the airplane. "Let's go to bed, then," he suggested as he started up the steps.

"Sir," I quietly explained. "Those beds have been reserved for other passengers." I finally got him back to the seat and sat him next to the window to prevent further escapes.

"More sake," he said. I rationed out another glassful and I tried to get him settled down. I was praying that the sleeping pills would finally kick in. He seemed to nod off. For the first time in hours I relaxed in my seat and stretched my legs.

"Major," he suddenly said, startling me, "tell the pilots to radio ahead and let the Emperor know that I will be one hour late for our meeting." There I was, back on the front line in an instant. I reluctantly got up out of my seat and walked toward the pilot's cabin, as if on my way to the electric chair. I hated having to do this. A stewardess intercepted me at the entrance.

"Can I help you, sir?"

I thought quickly. "Could I have a pillow?"

She found a pillow and I returned to Rinpoche, who seemed to be sleeping. I had only just sat down when he asked, "Did you send the message, Johnny?"

"Yes," I lied.

"Good. Then go ahead and also tell them to notify the High Commissioner in Hong Kong that we will meet on Wednesday."

Up I got again. I went over to the stewardess and told her that the Prince of Bhutan would appreciate it if the pilot would radio the British High Commissioner and let him know that the Prince would be unable to meet with him next week. To my surprise she just said, "Of course, sir."

When I returned to my seat Rinpoche was banging his head against the side of the plane. Bang, bang, bang. He would hit his head and then grind his teeth.

"Sir, Sir. Can I put a pillow under your head?"

He growled as I stuffed the pillow between his head and the wall. The gentleman in the seat behind us leaned over and asked, "Is the Prince all right?"

"Fine, fine," I answered testily. I was suddenly aware of the other first class passengers looking over at me, looking like

they thought I was crazy. I felt totally paranoid in my uniform. An elderly woman was eyeing me suspiciously. Did they think Rinpoche was a real Prince? Ugly thoughts entered my mind. Has Rinpoche been talking to them while I was up front with the stewardess? He could have told them anything! Perhaps he intimated I was planning to hijack the plane or even that I was planning to overthrow the Bhutanese government! I was outraged. Why do these people think I am crazy? He's the crazy one!

I stabbed a look at him in the seat next to me. There he was, sleeping like an innocent child. Or more like a well-fed tiger, I thought sarcastically. At least things seemed to have finally settled down. The pills were working and he was sleeping with a soft rhythmic snore. Relieved, I switched off the overhead lights and waited a few more minutes before heading to the back of the aircraft to take a break with the boys.

Carl saw me coming down the aisle. He must have noticed my haggard look because right away he asked how things had been going up front.

"Jesus, I need a break. He's acting crazy again." And I detailed all the things I had been dealing with since the flight began.

"Here, have some coffee," said Carl.

"Here, have a drink," Bob offered. I took both and we sat chatting for about ten minutes. Then Carl volunteered to sit with Rinpoche for a while, which I readily accepted. I walked him up the aisle to the first class section and pulled back the dividing curtain. There was Rinpoche, upright in the aisle, supported on either side by a passenger and from the rear by a stewardess and smiling broadly.

"The Prince wants to make a speech to the passengers," declared the man on his left.

"It's okay, it's okay," I said hurriedly. "We'll take him now."

They looked at Carl and me suspiciously. Yeah, I thought, let them think we're going to assassinate the gentle Prince. "It's not a bad idea at that," I muttered to myself.

"That's it," I said to Carl in a peeved tone, as we dragged Rinpoche to the back of the aircraft. "That's it for his tricks." I was taking charge of this situation!

We reached a row of empty seats, where I pushed up the arms to make a bed for Rinpoche. Bob got a blanket and pillows. The gentle Prince settled down and snuggled into the makeshift bed, delighted by all the attention. He seemed to be getting to sleep right away this time, which satisfied me immensely. I'd done it. It had been six hours of this stuff and now he would sleep. Bob, Carl, and I would be able to stand in the aisle and talk, drink, and enjoy the rest of the flight. I silently congratulated myself on my fortitude and prowess in handling a difficult situation.

I glanced over to check on Rinpoche one last time. Something was not right. His stomach was bouncing up and down like Jell-O. I realized he was laughing! I looked more closely and saw he was winding a small ball of yarn. With disbelief my eyes followed the yarn from Rinpoche's hand to the sweater of the sleeping passenger in the seat in front of him. I made a clumsy dive to snatch the ball of yarn away from Rinpoche, waking up the passenger in all the commotion. He looked blearily down at the ball of yarn in my hand and then at his partially dismantled sweater, slowly recognizing the connection.

"Sorry," I said lamely. "I found this on the floor." I dropped the small ball of yarn into his hand. He looked at my uniform and said nothing, but he did move to another seat farther away.

"Let's have breakfast," piped up Rinpoche cheerily. Wondering about the time, I looked at my watch, but couldn't see the hands. I looked again, but it seemed like a foreign object. I peered out the aircraft window to assess the position of the sun and it took me a full minute to realize the window shade was closed. Finally, I raised the shade, only to find it was pitch black.

"Is it breakfast time?" asked Rinpoche with a touch of sarcasm.

I flushed with anger. "Yes, Sir, perhaps we could get the Emperor to serve it."

Bob ran off to get breakfast and Rinpoche called Carl over to him.

"I want you to get the first class stewardess back here so I can fuck her," Rinpoche said to him. Poor Carl began to protest, but Rinpoche wouldn't stand for it and so off Carl went on his mission. I was delighted to be off the hook and have Carl take my place. I was almost joyful. Rinpoche looked at me sharply.

"Get some sake," he growled, grinding his teeth.

I brought Rinpoche a full bottle and he drank it down as if it were water.

Down the aisle toward us came Carl with the demure stewardess in tow. Another helpless victim, I was thinking.

Carl came near and drawing himself up formally said, "Your Royal Highness, may I present Ms. Yamomuch. Ms. Yamomuch, his Royal Highness, the Prince of Bhutan." During this gracious introduction the Prince sat on the edge of his seat like Quasimodo about to leap from the bell tower of Notre Dame. He was swinging his arm back and forth, sake was dripping from his mouth, and his red eyes were rolling like a Mahākāla.[38] He ground his teeth and gave a primordial growl. We were all frozen in fear, including Ms. Yamomuch. I noticed his swinging hand was moving ever closer to Ms. Yamomuch's kimono. The next instant Rinpoche turned his head and looked at me with the piercing eye of a hawk. I was so bewildered by the look I could not even be sure he had turned his head.

The buzz of a thousand flies fills the space around me. I see us all frozen in place and Rinpoche is running around us in a counterclockwise direction. His hair is long and streaming out behind him as he runs. There we are, standing in the middle of a desert. I can see the sky, the sand, and the rocks quite clearly. Rinpoche is running around yelling crazily.

---

[38] One of the most important benefactors and protectors in Buddhism who appears in an extremely wrathful form.

He made a move to reach up Ms. Yamomuch's kimono. I snapped out of it and the others jumped to pull him back. Carl stopped Ms. Yamomuch from falling backward into the plane aisle.

"Very nice to meet you," she said in a high, meek voice as she retreated back to her station. I flopped down in a seat, totally exhausted. This had been going on nonstop for hours. I had had enough, and I just passed out into sleep.

Carl woke me about a half an hour before we were to land in Japan.

"Where is he?" I asked, a bit anxiously.

"He's asleep," Carl reassured me. "He went to sleep right away after he met the stewardess. Is it always like this?"

"Most of the time," I answered.

"God help us," he stated.

We all walked off the plane in Japan like zombies, except the Prince. He was delighted by the prospect of having some real Japanese sake. We were at the Tokyo airport only a few hours until our flight left for Hong Kong. Mercifully, Rinpoche slept the entire way of the second leg of the trip and I began to relax and look forward to seeing Mike in Hong Kong.

I was physically exhausted, but elated also as I thought back to the vision I had seen during the flight. We were all frozen and Rinpoche was running around in this desert trying to pull us out of that. What had it felt like? He had a different body, younger, athletic, and with no sign of his paralyzed left side. He was naked and was running in a clockwise direction, or was it counterclockwise? (My dyslexia was causing me to become more confused as I thought about it longer, so I dropped the inquiry.) We were all in the center of Rinpoche's circle. At least I could see myself clearly. Carl, Bob, and others I only sensed as shadows or transformations. I thought about that: If I "saw" myself, then something (myself?) must have been observing me. That thought confused me even more. I switched to remembering the desert. It was flat with rocks scattered about. We were facing toward the horizon. On the left was a range of mountains. There were no plants. The

sky was very blue. It looked like early dawn. I had a feeling that someone was watching me. I looked over to Rinpoche, but he was still sleeping. That's what started it! His look of piercing emptiness. The whole thing could have lasted only for a second of time. I would have to ask him about it. I began to feel jumpy and thought about having some coffee or sake. I chose sake.

We flew into Hong Kong between the mountains and down through the night mist and fog. Where the hell did the day go? It must have been day at some time. I tried to figure out the time sequence but could not. I only had a feeling that America was somewhere behind me. The Hong Kong airport was like a movie set in its sense of unreality. I just walked with Rinpoche. His right hand was holding on to my left hand. It was like I was supporting a moving rock. I was supposed to be helping him, the cripple, but everything seemed too weird and crazy. People were crowding, moving about in unknown directions, and making sounds that didn't fully mesh with the movement of their mouths. I was happy to be holding his hand, as I was freaking out again. I saw Mike standing in front of us, wearing his military uniform stained with sweat. I was so delighted to see him. While the others retrieved the bags, Mike and I stuffed Rinpoche into a waiting taxi. Rinpoche dozed off and I asked Mike about His Holiness.

"We'll see him tomorrow. It's not looking good, Johnny," said Mike. "How was the trip?"

I started to answer, to try and get my thoughts organized into words to describe the last (what was it) days? I just shook my head and answered, "Crazy."

"Ha, one of those," exclaimed Mike.

"Yes, one of those," I replied.

We pulled into the hotel and hauled the sleeping Rinpoche out of the cab. As we crossed the lobby of the hotel I had an image of what we must look like. Two military officers with English tropical uniforms and Sam Browne belts carrying between them a drunk or drugged . . . what does Rinpoche look

like to the people standing by? Maybe they think we are taking him up to a room to interrogate him.

We got Rinpoche upstairs to our room, which was actually two rooms with a pull-out bed for me. Rinpoche woke up for a few minutes to ask for a glass of sake. Carl asked him what name he would like the hotel to print on his matches. Apparently, this hotel offered the courtesy of printing your name in gold on their red matchbooks. Without hesitation he answered, "Lord Mukpo." Thank God, the Prince of Bhutan is dead, I thought. I tucked Rinpoche into bed. He giggled and I tensed up. Now what is he laughing about? Who is kidding whom here?

Carl and Bob were all excited about being in Hong Kong and Mike volunteered to take them out to some hot spots. I was glad to remain with Rinpoche, most of all because he was sleeping and I desperately wanted to sleep too. I no sooner got my tattered body into bed and was drifting off than I heard a thump in the next room. I knew what it was. Rinpoche had fallen out of bed. I ran in and found him sitting on the floor next to his bed.

"Where are we, Johnny?" he asked sleepily.

"Hong Kong," I said. He did not believe me, so I drew open the curtain on the window. It was dawn, and in the park across the way hundreds of people were standing and doing windmill type motions with their arms. It took me a few seconds to realize they were practicing Kung Fu or one of those Asian martial arts.

"See, Sir, it's Hong Kong," I said in triumph.

Rinpoche peeked out, looking frail. He was nude and bent over with his hands clasped modestly in front of him. It seemed slightly strange because we were way up on the twenty-first floor.

"Oh," he said, "look at all the people. I thought we were still at the Court and you had changed all the furniture around to play a trick on me."

I was totally amazed by his statement. Shocked, I began to protest, "Sir, me play a trick on you?" Then I looked at his innocent round face and I started to laugh at getting caught yet again.

"Are you okay, Johnny?" he asked, looking at me in a queer way.

"Yes, Sir, yes, Sir," I replied.

"Then let's have some breakfast," he sang out joyfully.

Dip me in boiling blood, I mentally despaired. When am I going to get to rest? I ordered room service for Lord Mukpo and Major Perks. Rinpoche switched from sake to Chinese beer—four bottles. As we ate and drank I asked him about my vision on the plane. "Just think of it as gap," he said.

Later that day we drove up the hill to the hospital where His Holiness was staying. It was steaming hot and even hotter in the hospital, which was like the movie set of *Back to Bataan.* There were slow-moving ceiling fans that ineffectively shifted the hot air around. In the halls were rickety old beds holding all kinds of bodies. The rooms were jammed with patients. It all smelled like disinfectant and death.

When I was a surgical technician at St. Luke's Hospital in New York, we had to cut the leg off an old man because of gangrene. The leg was a mass of puss, blood, and oozing green stuff. The smell of rotting human flesh was so strong we had to spray our surgical masks with perfume so as not to throw up. After the operation we could not find the rotten leg. Eventually, we got a panicked call from the laundry that one of the women had fainted. It seemed our orderly had unwittingly picked up the leg with the surgical sheets and bloody gowns. The bundle had been thrown down the chute into the laundry carts where the poor woman had picked up the rotten leg. I was sent down to retrieve it and take it to the morgue.

This hospital was like that leg in its blatant assault on the senses. Not much was hidden, and it had none of the comforts of American hospitals. Mike explained to us that His Holiness had had exploratory surgery about two hours earlier. The surgeon had felt around the liver, found it covered with cancerous nodules, and had simply sewn him back up. Nothing could be done for him.

I prepared myself as I entered his room to be looking at His Holiness's near-dead body. From behind Mike I could see the Tibetan thangkas on the walls. There were the pungent smell of incense and the usual chanting monks. And there was His Holiness, sitting up in bed, smiling at us. It was decidedly more shocking than seeing his dead body. I stood in the corner of the room, trying to keep out of the way while His Holiness and Rinpoche conversed in Tibetan. I took up my reverent stance with hands held together in front of me and head slightly bowed. I looked up and Rinpoche and His Holiness were laughing at me. I flushed red with embarrassment. They both smiled and His Holiness beckoned me over. I walked over in front of him and bent down my head in the usual manner. As His Holiness's hand gently touched my head I started to sob uncontrollably.

"I hope so," His Holiness said in broken English. I continued weeping and backed away to my corner. I wanted more than anything to get out of that unbearable realm of death. It was only the dignity of my military uniform that kept me from running away.

We were all crying in the taxi on the way back to the hotel. Rinpoche was crying harder than any of us. He was so loud that he was drowning out the rest of us. Suddenly he stopped short and we looked at him.

"Well, it is traditional to cry, you know," he said, grinding his teeth.

Peter, a rich actor from New York, was over in Hong Kong at this same time. He was a student of Rinpoche, although I was not really sure because Peter was always buying his way into things he wanted. I, being very critical of his behavior, decided he couldn't really be Rinpoche's student. I once asked him what kind of skull cup he would buy if he ever took the Vajrayogini Abhisheka. His response was "chocolate," which I thought was a great answer. I remember at Seminary we were all eating mush and Peter had a stash of frozen steaks. At the time, I asked him if I could have the bones to chew on. He wouldn't let me. He might have thought I was kidding, but the fucker was so cheap he wouldn't even give

me a bone. Rinpoche said that in order to get money out of Peter you would have to be enlightened. Rinpoche took pride in the fact that nobody could get bucks out of this guy. Even when Rinpoche was sick and we needed to get him a hospital bed, Peter wanted to sell one to us.

Anyway, he was here in Hong Kong with his father, where they had a business enterprise. Peter had invited Rinpoche to a party to meet his dad. He really just wanted Rinpoche, but he knew the rest of us would be tagging along. The party was in Kowloon, on the other side of the bay from where we were staying.

Rinpoche wanted us all to wear our uniforms for this occasion. It took me about two hours to dress him and get all his medals pinned on straight. All the while he was drinking some sort of Chinese liquor and saying "fucking Chinese" between sips. I knew he was thinking of how they forced him out of Tibet. Mike came in, dressed in a crisp uniform. I don't think I had taken mine off since leaving America, and it must have looked like I had been through the trenches of World War I.

Mike and I had to carry Rinpoche down the stairs because he was quite drunk and seemingly unconscious. We piled into the waiting cab and off we set for Kowloon. We were somewhere along in the tunnel under the river when Rinpoche abruptly yelled out, "Turn back!"

"Sir, we are in a one-way tunnel. We can't."

"Turn back!" he hollered at me.

Mike spoke up. "We'll turn back at the next exit." That seemed to calm him down and we eventually turned around and made our way back to the hotel. As we carried his prone body into the hotel Rinpoche came to, looked at us, and said, "How did this happen?" Mike and I just shrugged to each other and took him up to his room and put him to bed. Mike and Bob headed out to see the sights again while I stayed to watch over the sleeping Rinpoche.

Some time later there was loud knocking on the door. Bob and Mike were back, quite drunk, with two Chinese whores in tow.

The girls were really rough-looking and I was not at all sure about letting them in. Nonetheless, the whole group came in and woke up Rinpoche with their loud talk. He was delightful and sweet, like a great welcoming host. He gave both the girls meditation instruction and they soon lost interest in Bob and Mike. They were in love with Rinpoche! He gave them money, all he had in his pockets, and eventually sent them off again with Bob and Mike.

Later that night I received a call from Peter.

"Sorry we weren't able to get to your party," I apologized.

"Well, it was called off at the last minute," said Peter. "We had to cancel because my father had a heart attack at 8:00 p.m."

That was just about the time we were in the tunnel, I realized with a jolt. I looked over in wonderment at Rinpoche who was snoring peacefully in bed.

We returned to America several days later. It was decided that I would fly alone with Rinpoche on the leg from Seattle, Washington, to Halifax, Nova Scotia. In my paranoia, I felt the others were being nice to me, treating me like this because it was my last journey. They knew the I in me wouldn't survive. I was freaked out, but grateful that the end was near. I romantically saw myself being carried off, like Hamlet carried on his shield to the ramparts, with the solemn background music of muffled drums and booming guns.

I was getting Rinpoche ready to go to the airport for this last flight. While he washed and combed his hair I picked up the newspaper and read the headline "Sadat Assassinated."

"Sir," I blurted out. "Anwar Sadat has been killed!"

I looked at Rinpoche in the mirror. "I'll be next," he said, grinding his teeth.

"You're not going to die, Sir," I said, my panic rising.

"Oh, yes, I am," he smiled at me.

On this trip back to Halifax, Rinpoche was like a normal person. I was able to talk to him and ask him all sorts of dumb questions about Buddhism, which he answered with great patience. We chatted for hours, just like regular people. He discussed

everything I brought up: politics, sex, women, Vajradhatu, Tibet, hunting, war, Celts, Druids, movies, America, the military, sake, Japan, England, the Court, horses . . . anything! I was in the full bloom of simply chatting with Rinpoche. Some of the time we just sat and held hands. I had never done this before with him and I was in love with Rinpoche.

"Take me," said Rinpoche. "I'm yours."

"I love you, Rinpoche."

"Could not care less," came the reply.

It was bleak, wintry, and cold in Halifax upon our return. We were waiting day to day for news of the death of His Holiness. Rinpoche was drinking almost nonstop. In fact, it became difficult to get sake in Halifax because we had drunk most of it. Rinpoche got up one night to vomit up blood in the sink. I called Dr. Jim, who was also the Vajradhatu ambassador in Halifax, to come over right away. I saved some of the vomit, which he took to have tested at the hospital. We got a phone call from Hong Kong.

"This is it," I thought. Rinpoche spoke in Tibetan, hung up the phone, and turned to me.

"We had better get packed, Johnny. His Holiness is being moved to a hospital in a place called Zion. It's in Illinois, near Chicago."

On our arrival in Chicago we drove directly to Zion. Mike was already there with His Holiness. I entered the room and took my customary position in the corner. Mike helped the nurse change His Holiness's sheets. His body was frail and his back was covered with bedsores. He winced in pain as he was moved and then smiled at the nurse. His Holiness pointed to me and I thought maybe he wanted me to leave the room. But he smiled and one of the monks pushed me toward him. I couldn't help myself as I began to cry. His Holiness touched my hand and radiated warmth. He smiled at me as our eyes met. "Kusung Dapön," he said gently, then added in his broken English, "Nothing is happening." As I left the room I looked back at him. I was crying because he was so magnificent.

We stayed in Chicago only a few days. It was not clear how long His Holiness would live. The Tibetans talked as if he would not die. Mike just shrugged his shoulders in disbelief. Rinpoche was not well as we traveled back to Halifax and I was in a pretty freaked-out, disoriented state. A few weeks later Mike called to tell us the end was near. Rinpoche asked me to pack for the trip.

"Sir," I said despondently, "I can't go through this all again."

He looked at me and smiled.

"Okay, Johnny," he said. "I'll give His Holiness your love."

I turned away and choked, tears streaming down my face. Barnstone, another of the Kusungs, went in my place with Rinpoche. Several days later we heard that His Holiness had died.

"The mala is broken and the beads scattered," pronounced Rinpoche. I walked down the city street in the rain. I felt myself dissolving into emptiness with a broken heart.

I asked Rinpoche, "Why did His Holiness get cancer?"

And he answered, "Once, while the monks were setting up His Holiness's tent, someone trod on it."

I did not understand his explanation. But later, one night at the Court, I was out at dinner, and when I got back to the Court I learned that Rinpoche had been taken to the hospital in Denver. I rushed down to Denver to be with him and slept with him in his hospital room. I asked the Kusung on duty what had happened. He explained that Rinpoche had thrown himself headlong down a flight of stairs. In asking for further details, I found that the Kusung, rather than following the established procedure of walking behind Rinpoche up the stairs so that if Rinpoche fell he would fall on the Kusung, had instead taken Rinpoche's arm and pulled him up the stairs. At the top of the stairs, Rinpoche twisted himself around out of the Kusung's grasp and threw himself headlong down the stairs.

I then had some realization of why treading on His Holiness's tent could cause irreparable damage. It seemed as if in enlightened society, there is little room for mindlessness.

*Chapter 10*

# Commentary

*The Prince of Bhutan and his aide, Major Perks, made many journeys together. Most often the prince was dressed in an expensive three-piece suit and his aide in a military uniform tailored in the English tradition, although sometimes the Prince would wear a military uniform with the insignias of a field marshall. And, then again, we might be seen in naval uniforms, that of Admiral of the Fleet and his aide, a commodore.*

*It is rather puzzling to me that over all those years nobody questioned our authenticity or even asked for documentation. It was certainly true in a country like India that a uniform created an air of authority and as we walked through an airport the crowds of people would part before us. Other, genuine, military or naval officers would salute. I even remember an instance where we entered an elevator in a plush hotel in Delhi which was full of Russian naval officers. There was a moment's hesitation on both sides. Then they stood to attention and saluted our apparent superior rank and said in broken English, "Ah, British navy," even though the Admiral was clearly of Asian extraction.*

*There was something about wearing a uniform that inspired in me a sense of confidence and purpose, and I took great care in*

*making sure that everything was polished and ship-shape. Many times, while traveling in America, people would ask to what military we belonged. Rinpoche would always answer, "Guess." Whatever they guessed is what we'd be, and it ranged from Israeli army to Taiwanese navy. It became so ordinary that I began to believe the whole thing myself. It was somewhat like being an actor in a very large play with a totally intuitive script.*

*What I really got hung up on was having to go to the cockpit and ask the pilots or senior stewardesses to radio ahead to some person like the queen or the prime minister or the emperor to cancel a tea or arrange a dinner party for the Prince. These tasks caught me between the illusion and the reality of the situation. It was not until much later that I realized the illusion not only of our game but of the whole game. From that point of view, one could see the actors working with a very predictable script.*

*Rinpoche talked often about the energy that a uniform created, not only in the human realm, but also in the realm of Drala energy, which became attracted to the quality of the uniform. (Drala is the god of war and patron of warlords and warriors in the Bon tradition, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet.) I began to see many mythologies entering the reality of what I thought was my existence. It created a very groundless situation in which I could be walking somewhat normally down a street and within seconds be engulfed in this groundlessness, so much so that I was not sure how to move my legs or how to walk.*

*The same kind of groundless situation manifested in circumstances where Rinpoche created what seemed to be a field of energy around himself, in which one was engulfed. It felt rather like being caught in a whirlwind of unexplained origin and then all of a sudden it would stop and leave you dazed and reeling in space. I would always look around because I was surprised that no one else but our immediate party seemed to notice that anything had happened.*

*On this particular journey that play of energy continued almost without a break other than when I would fall asleep from total exhaustion. There was no refuge place. I could not even take refuge*

*in my confusion, because the energy created seemed to go beyond something that Rinpoche himself had organized. It seemed an immutable natural force, rather like he was stirring a pot which would continue to move under its own energy. I knew I was being shown something that I could not explain. And certainly, by this time, I had almost stopped panicking at every situation.*

*The hospital in Hong Kong was like a charnel ground. It had all the smells, sounds, and sights of the suffering of pain and death. The most shocking thing was to see His Holiness sitting in the middle of all of this, himself in the throes of pain and death, but sitting there smiling and being concerned with others around him. That was completely shocking. It was like entering a realm that I had never experienced or did not believe could exist on this planet. And yet, it was more real than any illusion of reality that I carried around with me.*

*With the death of His Holiness, I began to feel that I had to do something to perpetuate his and Rinpoche's world. I had no idea what to do or how to organize anything. I just had an overpowering feeling that I must do something to repay the enormous amount of love and compassion that had been given to me so generously and that I, out of ignorance and confusion, had almost taken for granted. Now there grew in my heart the determination never to give up on the visions, messages, experiences and love that I had received.*

*Chapter 11*

# Hello, Goodbye, Hello

Dorje Trolo takes no prisoners. Clinging to any invention is cut down. "Keep it simple, let the phenomena play," it says.

With the death of His Holiness, our world changed. From this time on Rinpoche began to manifest completely as Dorje Trolo. Dorje Trolo is a deity who is extremely fierce, riding on a pregnant tigress surrounded by flames. In Rinpoche's words, "There is no room for interpretations. There is no room for making a home out of this. There is just spiritual energy going on that is real dynamite. If you distort it you are destroyed on the spot. If you are actually able to see it, then you are right there with it. It is ruthless. At the same time it is compassionate, because it has all this energy in it."

I realized that Rinpoche had manifested as one deity or another during most of our relationship together. Dealing with the manifestation of a deity is dealing with a mind arising from space—not attached to whatever we think of as good or bad. There is no way to manage such energy. One cannot organize it or placate it in any way. It just exists like a natural force. I picked

up on Trungpa Rinpoche's energy as Dorje Trolo and realized that "yes or no" was not an option.

I was also still hanging on to vestiges of my ego that Rinpoche consistently undermined, short-circuited, or directly commented on. The effect on a personal level was that Rinpoche, the Admiral of the Fleet, set fire to the conceptual ship I had built. There were no lifeboats, no life jackets, and no way to control the blaze. The ocean was vast and there were signs of storm everywhere. A red, nude sixteen-year-old girl, Vajrayogini, danced around pouring gasoline on the flames. If one helped by jumping into the fire, one felt open, vast, and blissful. If one went against the energy, it felt like being encased in solid, hot glass. The whole situation was very electric and basically uncontrollable.

I passionately felt that I owed a great debt to His Holiness and in order to repay it I would have to do something that would directly help all beings. But I also felt that I had no ability to do such a thing. Adding to the emotional squeeze of being close to the energy of Dorje Trolo was the fact that Rinpoche's physical body was beginning to deteriorate. He often threw up blood. I would hold him bending over the sink while the blood splashed red in the white sink. I felt as if it were coming from me. My body reacted to the spectacle by retching. Against all odds we tried to limit his intake of alcohol. But as Dorje Trolo, he just used more, seemingly as fuel for energy.

A teaching tour was planned for Europe and we flew to Ireland on the first leg of that trip. Dr. Mike and I were able to keep his consumption down during the flight, even as he kept remarking how he was looking forward to a real glass of Guinness once we had landed. On our arrival in Dublin we went to the lounge to buy our first pints. Dr. Mike, dressed in his best clean uniform, sat opposite Dorje Trolo. As ordered, I served Dorje Trolo a large glass of fresh Guinness. Holding it up he toasted with the slogan, "Guinness is good for you!" and downed the entire beer in one gulp. Dr. Mike and I exchanged glances of concern. Everything seemed fine until, suddenly, Dorje Trolo opened

his mouth wide and expelled a geyser of Guinness all over Dr. Mike.

"Thanks a lot, Rinpoche," said Dr. Mike.

"Must be a blessing," I joked.

"Next time you can get blessed," he retorted. Off Dr. Mike went to the men's room to clean up.

Dorje Trolo just growled, "Give me another."

I did as he ordered, but stayed out of range of any further blessings.

We visited Newgrange, the prehistoric Irish mound. We made our way through its snake-like passage into the central chamber. Someone asked, "Do you feel any presence here, Rinpoche?" He looked at me, but I declined to offer an answer. He waited and, still looking at me, answered, "I guess not." During our travels, there was quite a bit of talk about Celtic influence and culture. I decided to remain silent, mainly because I was wary of getting caught up in another crazy scheme. Of course, I was fighting a losing battle. During another conversation in a pub someone asked about the Trungpa lineage and how it had begun.

"Well," Rinpoche began, "there were three idiots sitting by a river. One of them started the Trungpa lineage." There was a pause, then turning his eyes on me Rinpoche said pointedly, "You're an idiot, Johnny. Why don't you start a lineage?"

"Thanks a lot, Rinpoche," I replied.

"It must be a blessing!" piped up Dr. Mike.

I looked at him coolly as I went off to the men's room.

Behind me Dorje Trolo growled, "Give me another Guinness," passing the empty glass.

His Holiness's body had been returned to the monastery in Sikkim. Rinpoche announced that we would be going to India and then to Sikkim for a prefuneral visit.

"Why," I asked, "are we going to visit before the funeral?" It just didn't make any sense to me.

"It's an obligation I have," replied Rinpoche.

"An obligation?" I questioned.

"Yes," came the reply. "The lineage."

I still did not understand, but was excited to be going to India and went off to pack.

There were about fifteen in our group and another five traveling with the Regent. We flew Air India from London. On this flight Rinpoche sat with the Regent in first class and I was seated in the rear with the other sangha members. I felt quite alone and resentful, as it had always been my custom to sit with Rinpoche on these flights. I was becoming more and more upset when I noticed a stewardess come down the aisle bearing a tray with a bottle of wine and a glass.

"Major Perks?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied, expecting almost anything.

"Mr. Mukpo in first class says you should drink this," she said, setting down the tray and pouring the wine into the empty glass. I was in love again!

We landed in the New Delhi airport and I went up to first class to help Rinpoche off the plane. The crew opened the door and Rinpoche peered out. "Look, Johnny," he exclaimed excitedly, "India!" Hot air rushed over me, carrying with it the sweat and excrement of a million bodies.

"Wow," was all I could manage as my body wilted and I grew faint. Rinpoche placed his hand on my elbow to steady me. He seemed delighted to be in India.

Once we were at the hotel he told me to put on my naval uniform. He wanted to take me to the Red Fort where he used to buy desserts. "They are quite delicious." It was close to 10 p.m. and dark by the time the taxi driver let us out at the Red Fort. I was sweating in my wool naval uniform while Rinpoche looked quite comfortable in his light grey suit. Rinpoche said a few last words of instructions in Hindi to the driver to have him wait for us.

We found the stall in the crowded market. Rinpoche ordered the desserts and asked me to wait for them to be prepared. I stood by the stall, trying to isolate myself from the teeming crowd flow-

ing by. The smiling vendor eventually handed me the tray of round sugar balls and I turned to offer them to Rinpoche. He was not there! Not only was he nowhere in sight, the taxi was gone also! I looked through and across the billions of bodies moving like a human river and that old familiar panic rose in my breast.

Here I was, a tall white man in a foreign naval uniform in a sea of Indians. I couldn't speak a single word of Hindi. I couldn't even remember which hotel we were staying at. A few Indians were starting to look at me with curiosity, and there was still no Rinpoche. I felt in my pocket. I had a few English pounds in my wallet. In desperation I started to walk, without any sense of direction. Then a taxi pulled up beside me and Rinpoche rolled down the window and leaned his head out.

"Great, Johnny," he said, smiling broadly. "You have the dessert." He opened the door and I jumped in. As we ate the sticky dough balls in the backseat he asked, "Did you think we would leave you?"

"Yes," I answered a bit sullenly. "What would I have done?"

"Why, you could have started a dharma center," he replied with a laugh.

Dorje Trolo is back again, I thought to myself.

"It never went away," said Rinpoche, looking at me directly.

We took another flight to the foot of the mountains and then a long eight-hour taxi ride over winding dirt roads through jungles and up into the hills. Monkeys played by the dusty tracks. It was late at night before we finally arrived at the small hotel in Gantok. Some in our party were sick from the potent combination of Indian food and the dizzying ride. I felt strangely disconnected. I sensed a change was in the atmosphere surrounding Rinpoche.

This feeling had grown in me since the death of His Holiness, coupled with Rinpoche's recurring pronouncements of his own imminent demise. The awful impermanence that I could accept in concept but not in its stark reality was forcing my mind to freeze as it looked for a way out. To be in love is painful. To be in

unconditional love with the ever-changing impermanence, always saying hello and then goodbye, always being in transformation, was more than I could bear any longer.

To protect myself I retreated to the safety of whatever illusion John Perks was. After all, I had done this throughout my life—returned to the safety of self. When Peter was asked if he knew Christ, he denied the fact to save himself. Now that Dorje Trolo was pushing me out into the open I was running for shelter into myself. Even my intellectual compassion for others went out like a match in a windstorm. I became sick and lay in the small, unheated, bare hotel room for three days, throwing up bile and not eating.

Rinpoche visited but it offered little solace. He himself was throwing up blood. It didn't help that he would drink chang, the fermented barley beer, or, even worse, the Sikkimese brandy that tasted like yellow turpentine. I wanted to save myself. He was involved in showing the way, willing to continue beyond what I saw as the end, even to the end of impermanence. I had some understanding but no realization, so like Peter I said "I don't know him." The Regent suggested that I go live in Nova Scotia, that I had served enough. This was at least a way out for me and I mentioned the idea to Rinpoche, who was noncommittal, just growling, "We will see."

The Indian ambassador to Sikkim visited Rinpoche. He was dressed like a character out of a Victorian novel, with a cape and an ivory-handled walking stick. He flourished a lace handkerchief with waves of the hand to accent his points of rhetoric during his conversation.

Rinpoche spoke to him in English. "I'm thinking of leaving my attendant here to start a dharma group."

The ambassador looked at me. I was horrified and before he could speak I burst out with, "No, no it's just Rinpoche's joke."

To my alarm the ambassador said, "You would be most welcome."

I was silent and sullen when we left Gantok. On the long drive back I sat in the rear seat with Rinpoche for the first four

hours. He was drinking and rolling around saying, "We should stay in India and help the people. You should stay here." The very thought paralyzed me with fear. He grabbed my case and took out our passports and the money. "Here," he said matter-of-factly, "we don't need these any more." With that, he threw everything, money and all, out of the car window as we sped along. Then he reached for the airline tickets, which I had snatched from his hand. I yelled to the driver to stop and we screeched to a halt on the dusty road. I jumped out and waved down the other cars in the party. We searched the roadside and finally found the passports. The money, about three hundred dollars' worth, had blown out over the ledge to a river that flowed below. I went back to the car where Rinpoche had returned to drinking.

"I'm really worried about you, Sir," I announced, feigning concern.

He looked at me for some time and then said deliberately, "And I am worried about you."

I needed to save myself and asked Carl to take my place in the backseat with Rinpoche. I retreated to Carl's car. Later I asked Carl how Rinpoche behaved for the rest of the ride.

"Fine," was his tired answer.

"Did he say anything?" I asked, guilty about my desertion of post.

"Oh, yes," said Carl. "He made a point of saying over and over again, 'When students get fat like big ticks you have to pop them out into space'."

"Great," I thought, "fucking great."

During the long return to Boulder I became immersed in my own thoughts about moving to Nova Scotia. I was ready for almost anything different and I entertained numerous plans of escape. Halfheartedly I returned to the duties of the Court.

Back in Boulder there was a lady whom Rinpoche loved very much. There was also a young man who had never slept with a woman. Both of these people were very close students of

Rinpoche. In talking, Rinpoche expressed his interest in having this young man's first sexual encounter be a very positive one. It seemed to me quite normal when he proposed that his own consort spend the night with the young man. So it was arranged and came to pass. The following day I went into Rinpoche's bedroom to find him sitting on the edge of the bed, his head hung down. Sensing he might be sick, I inquired gently if everything was all right. I put my hand on his shoulder and his body lacked any energy or vitality. I looked into his face and saw that he had been crying, tears still rolling silently down his cheeks. Very concerned, I asked him what was the matter. He turned his deep brown watery eyes upon me and quietly said, "They spent the night together."

"But, Sir," I said in mild protest, "you set it up like that." He did not answer, but the tears continued. I managed to get him dressed, his body limp and unresponsive. He would not eat or drink. It was all tears. I called Michael Root, who lived close by, and explained that Rinpoche seemed brokenhearted and that I could not understand why, since he himself had suggested the rendezvous. Acting upon Michael's suggestion I drove Rinpoche over to Michael's house where we finally managed to give him a warm bath, washing his back with a sponge. Rinpoche still would not eat or even have his usual glass of sake.

Following a phone call Michael reported that the young couple had arrived back at the Court. Hearing that, Rinpoche perked up and said, "We must welcome them." Life returned to his body. He drank his waiting glass of sake and we drove back to the Court to prepare a welcoming meal. Rinpoche played the kind and gracious host to his lover and the young man. I did not fully realize at the time his enormous pain. In an act of compassion and kindness he gave up someone with whom he was truly in love to benefit another person. The fact was that he loved both of them and for their happiness unhesitatingly took upon himself the resulting pain.

My plans for moving to Nova Scotia proceeded. Some friends purchased an inn on the shore of the Bay of Fundy which

I was to run as innkeeper. Rinpoche hosted a going-away party for us at the Court. He gave a toast to "Johnny, the Pioneer" who was going to Nova Scotia to set up the Court and the Kingdom all by himself. I was happy to be going and sad to be leaving.

In Nova Scotia I had to deal with the reality of the poor economic prospect of running an inn in a remote area far from the tourist routes. While others were successful at running small businesses I was not, and earning a living became quite a struggle. During this time I was invited by the San Francisco and Los Angeles dharmadhatus to come and give talks on "The Kalapa Court." A tour was planned where I would start in Los Angeles and then proceed to San Francisco. Afterwards, I would go on to Boulder to be in attendance to Rinpoche at the Sakyong Abhisheka that Khyentse Rinpoche was to give to Rinpoche. Then I would go on to the military encampment before returning to Nova Scotia.

My first performance in Los Angeles went fairly smoothly but in San Francisco I began to have visions. The first one occurred while I was shopping for a pair of Highland dancing shoes to wear with my kilt. I began to notice points of light sparkling over everything. I put on my sunglasses but they were still there. I relaxed and began to enjoy the display while I waited for my companions to finish their meanderings. I sat down on a bench with a friend.

As we sit in silence a wind begins to blow around us in a circle, coming from a great blue lake off in the distance. As if we are looking at a movie screen, images of people climbing a mist-shrouded mountain appear. They are dressed in ancient clothing and carrying weapons: bows and swords. They are involved in some sort of struggle against materialism. I recognize myself as "Dancer at the Gates of Dawn." Voices give messages. A crystal city of light appears across a great ocean and immense longing overcomes me. Other voices speak and in a flash I understand the whole of the Vajrayogini Sadhana. I understand that I have completely invented everything: my persona, my life, the pain, the

pleasure, the good, the bad. The whole thing has been an illusion, something I have made up, completely fiction. The "I" never existed except in the self-created ghost. Then, suddenly, the vision ends and I am again sitting on the bench. The wind stops also.

I turned to my friend and said, "What the fuck was that?" Tears were streaming down her face.

She said, "I saw you with two women dressed in red. One was quite old and one was quite young and they were standing right next to you. The whole thing seemed so loving I just started to cry."

What was immediate was the realization that I had caused immense pain to others through the propagation of my projection of myself. This self had been formed in the interaction of birth, mother, father, family, friends, and environment. Included in this realization was the painful truth that this "I" had done and would do anything to maintain the façade of that solid body of illusion. It would love, hate, fight, lie, flatter, conceal, be joyful, feign compassion, or anything else to confirm its existence. I was stunned by my recognition of this—felt not on an intellectual level but as total realization beyond logic.

Over the next few days, unexpectedly, other visions would spontaneously create displays. Many were of past life situations. These were particularly painful to experience because the amount of suffering was condensed. It was like eating or taking into one's body both the visual and emotional experience of a Nazi death camp. When the visions seemed to be unending I became concerned that I was indeed going crazy. I had no control over these visionary events and my few attempts to relate them to my friends brought only alarm and concern to their faces. In secret places I cried a lot. I was alarmed at this world I had entered, in which I had no control or direction and no role except as a spectator.

I followed my original itinerary and traveled to the military encampment in Colorado. I went as the Lord Chamberlain Dapön, Sir John Perks, knowing there was nothing that existed in any reality. I was more than pleased to see Rinpoche, to whom I related the entire experience, along with the voice messages that

were addressed to him. I asked him directly, "Doesn't one have to be careful when traveling in this world?"

He replied, "No, being careful is hanging on. Just let go." He continued, "The visions are our connection, your connection to me and the lineage."

"People think I am going crazy," I protested.

"Johnny," he said, "some people will love what you do. Others will hate what you do and others couldn't care less. Don't pay any attention to any of it."

It was shocking to see the illusion of the reality of myself. While this had a lasting effect, I still experienced periods of my past reality. That is, I would still become attached to the reality of my ego for periods of time. For years Rinpoche had often asked me about other people in the sangha and how they were doing. In the beginning I would just say "Oh, fine." By saying that, I was of course also saying that I wasn't willing to get involved in the work of finding out what was truly happening to others. When Rinpoche's queries continued I realized I had to start to find out how people were faring and what was going on in their lives. That meant I had to have a relationship with someone else other than myself. Our talks about different people and their emotional and domestic situations expanded into having me act directly. I started to pay attention to others and I started to give up the safety net of self. My ability to do this was directly influenced by my revelation about the insubstantiality of my own self.

For the next few days I had no idea what to think or expect. At encampment I was not assigned any specific role and was left to myself for most of the month. The last event was to be a skirmish, the idea for which had in some strange way evolved from a story I had told Rinpoche.

In the Second World War my father was in the Home Guard, which was a British military organization made up of men who were either too old or too young to be in the regular service. He and his company staged a mock battle in the streets of Sidcup, where they "fought" a detachment of the Royal West Kents. Both

sides threw bags of chalk as ammunition and anyone who was hit was out of the game.

Rinpoche had developed this "game" into a fine art at the Shambhala military encampments. During this particular skirmish messengers ran to and fro across the battlefield, passing orders from Rinpoche himself to both of the opposing groups. Rinpoche, attired in his field marshall's uniform, sat under an awning high up in the pine fields next to a large outcropping of stones. The runners would run up to Rinpoche, bow, and report information concerning the troop movements. Rinpoche would give orders to be relayed back to each side. To me, standing next to him, the highland fields felt very vast. It rained on us for a short time and out of the thunderstorm a rainbow appeared. Everything was an extraordinary display, yet normal. Another messenger approached and Rinpoche turned his head toward me. I bent down to listen to his instructions. He said, "Wilcox should win." Without comment I took over the command, issuing orders to the messengers from that point forward. Wilcox's group did win and it all happened very precisely.

After the encampment Rinpoche returned to Boulder and I returned to my faltering attempts at inn-keeping in Nova Scotia. Some months later he came for a visit. A group of us were sitting around him drinking Scotch and sake. We were dressed splendidly in Scottish kilts, jackets, sporrans, shoes, and the socks with red swatches. I was thinking about the Celtic issue and how Rinpoche continually brought up the idea that he wanted me to do something with Celtic people. Every time, I had brushed it off as a trick Rinpoche was trying to play on me. Suddenly, in the midst of my reverie, he jumped up, pointed at me, and said, "That's it!"

In confusion at having my train of thought cut through in that way I said, "You mean we should all wear kilts?"

"No," he prompted, "larger, bigger vision."

I thought of the largest thing I could. "Lineage," I said. He nodded, smiled, and sat down. He intended to stay longer at our inn but was overtaken by sickness and so returned to Halifax and then to Boulder.

Later, I realized that he had picked the Celtic Buddhist lineage for me to work on. It was not something I would have picked for myself. But somehow, quite skillfully, he had nailed me to a course of action which I had no choice but to follow. It was like holding a hot potato that I couldn't drop. I still held on to aspirations of sitting up high on a throne and being a famous teacher—perhaps seeing people swoon at the pearls of wisdom that dropped from my lips. I had no idea then of the real work and relationships and concern for people that one is required to maintain in order to teach. Teaching is an experiential learning relationship that involves teacher and student—each learning from the other. I had no idea about taking on the pain of others. All of this I was to learn later on.

During my months of living in Nova Scotia I had begun to act like a teacher, in a puffed-up sort of way. I liked the idea of guruhood, being served and cared for by one's students. Not that I had any students of my own! But that did not prevent me from beginning to create the illusion and mystique of being a guru. Because of this I received a letter from the Vajradhatu administration telling me to cool it and instructing me to pay attention to my meditative practice. It also informed me that I would no longer be involved in Court functions. I felt that I had been fired, sacked, kicked out. I traveled to Boulder to see Rinpoche. My life, my marriage, my job, and my station in life were all in disarray. In deep distress I cried, "What shall I do?"

Rinpoche looked me over and said, "You should become a servant."

I was shocked. Me? An important person relegated to servitude? "How?" I sputtered.

He repeated very clearly, "You should go out on your own and become a servant."

"But, Rinpoche," I protested, "I am the center of your life, and you are the center of my life."

He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "I adore you forever." I had an anguished feeling that he was saying goodbye. And

walking away from the Court the old familiar cloud of aloneness settled over me.

In a numb daze I left Nova Scotia for Boston and found a job as a butler to a widowed lady on Beacon Hill. My family's bedroom window in the back of the apartment faced a brick wall only twenty feet away. That symbolized how I felt—a solid structure facing me in my search for enlightenment. Working for ordinary people with their likes and dislikes was challenging, and my own resentments made things even more difficult.

I longed to be back at the Court and I telephoned Rinpoche several times requesting to be allowed to return. Finally, he sent a message to me via a sangha member that he wanted me to come to encampment as an ordinary trainee. I was shocked and upset by the news. I, who had been a director, a somebody, was being asked to be a nobody, nonexistent, and banished from the physical presence of my teacher. It was so painful I developed psoriasis with oozing sores all over my body. Even terminating my life seemed like a useless repetitive endeavor with no release. At last, Rinpoche called me himself and said, "Come home Johnny."

I rushed to move back to Boulder. Within a few weeks I had set myself up with a job in Denver and rushed to the Court, only to find I had been assigned a job as a trainee in service. I was utterly beside myself and spoke to Rinpoche in person about my anguish. He said clearly, "You have to go out and be on your own." I finally got the point and dejectedly turned to leave. As I reached the door he reminded me, "Keep it simple. Let the phenomena play." I returned to Boston and found a new job as manager of one of the Harvard clubs. I rented a house in the suburbs and started life all over again with my wife and son.

Within the year, news reached me that Rinpoche's physical health was deteriorating rapidly and I flew to Halifax to see him. By then he was in the hospital. He raised his arm in a fist salute as I entered the room but did not speak. After he was released from the hospital I returned to Boston, but within weeks I received an urgent call to return to Halifax. I flew in on a small

Air Canada aircraft, which landed at the Halifax airport at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, April 4, 1987. As the wheels of the aircraft touched the runway I sang under my breath the Shambhala anthem. After passing through customs I was met by a friend. I asked him, "How's Rinpoche?" He replied tearfully that he had just been on the phone to the hospital and Rinpoche had died fifteen minutes ago.

We went to the Court where his body was already dressed and seated on a throne. He had his glasses on. As I looked up at him I was overwhelmed by the energy of his presence. My heart rushed toward him and I was so elated to see him it did not actually occur to me that he was dead. It wasn't until hours later that my aloneness hit me. I felt like an iceberg in a vast ocean. It was my innate habit when presented with traumatic events to shield myself from the pain at the very moment of the trauma. That habit was also destined to become obsolete.

Then I dreamt he had played a trick on all of us and was hiding out somewhere and was not really dead. It was as if he had shown us all a glimpse of an enlightened world within which we could all exist. And then he had left and we remained with an intense yearning to live in such a world. I was again having to give up personal attainment, personal enlightenment—which was meaningless anyhow because there was no personal enlightenment. Enlightenment had to benefit all beings. Out of that intense yearning and sadness, one had to begin again to establish an enlightened world—the world that Trungpa Rinpoche had shown us.

Many students expressed relief at the final death of Trungpa Rinpoche. I was somewhat surprised at this. However, it was understandable from some point of view because Rinpoche did not let anyone off the hook during the last years before his death. And the intensity of the attacks on one's personal ego and reference points was constant and enormously personally traumatic. Ironically, his death changed nothing, because the very thought of him would bring back the intensity of his teachings. Nobody

was going anywhere because there was nowhere to go back to—unless, of course, one was able to opt out of one's devotion and commitment by becoming engrossed in the material world or thinking that the teachings are based on personality and self-aggrandizement.

Khyentse Rinpoche came to help the sangha and I was able to speak to him. I asked him about the visions I still continued to have. "Oh, that," he said. "I do that between 2:00 and 4:00 every afternoon." I laughed and was relieved. He had made it ordinary for me.

A few days later I was waiting to bid Khyentse farewell as he left to return to India. It was a drizzly, foggy Nova Scotia day. I was part of a large crowd of students on the street across from his house. Harold, the monk, stood next to me. Together we watched as Khyentse Rinpoche came out of the house, large and brilliant like the sun and radiating warmth. A host of attendants fussed about him. Harold looked at me and said, "You used to be such a part of that inner circle. Do you miss it?" A sense of desolation swept over me as I watched Khyentse Rinpoche waving from his departing car. Then I felt joy. I said to Harold, "Happy and sad." He nodded in understanding.

*Chapter 11*

# Commentary

*During this time, when not attending to Rinpoche or matters of the Court, I was practicing the "meditation sadhana of the Glorious Coemergent Mother Vajrayogini." It was integrated in my everyday life like the sadhana had never begun nor ever ended. With Rinpoche throwing up red blood into the white sink, white on the outside, red on the inside, it was vast and spacious. In the middle of it is a lotus, corpse, and sun disk seat.*

*Look, look at your own mind.*
*Mind itself never existed.*
*This nonexistent mind*
*Is the great wonder of the variety of appearance.*
*Mind is merely appearance.*
*That mind of all sentient beings*
*Is the wisdom of great bliss,*
*Incomprehensible complete non-thought,*
*Appearing in the nature of that luminosity*
*For the desires of many sentient beings,*
*A variety of skillful means are sown.*

*By a variety of illusory activities*
*The warrior behaves like a lion,*
*Attaining the incomprehensible state.*
*This is the blessing of the Jetsun Mother.*
*The lineage gurus are like a variety of jewels*
*For the benefit of the worthy ones.*

*I repeated those lines over and over many times, having no realization of what they meant. But the series of visions in California dissolved my kleshas,*[39] *enabling me to realize the blessings of the Jetsun Mother and the lineage gurus on a very experiential level. Everything fell away at one point, even anything that I had understood about what was called Buddhism. The experience was so stunning that I became frozen, rather like having seen the head of Medusa. Rinpoche pointed this out to me. I longed for the comfort of just being in his company. I longed for our conversation without words. Like the moon, I longed to be in the warmth of the sun. I could teach, but I didn't know anything.*

*At this point, I think I could have stopped and become just a Pratyekabuddha person—that is, someone who seeks enlightenment just for himself. Not that I was enlightened, but the path was continuing. What kept me from taking that route was the total generosity and unconditional love I had been given by my teachers, Trungpa Rinpoche, Khyentse Rinpoche, and His Holiness, Karmapa. My compassion was very primitive and reserved for only a few.*

*Although it was shocking at the time, I later appreciated Rinpoche's wisdom in telling me to go out on my own and to become a servant. This was the training I received in how to serve others. Through many trials and tribulations I learned from the people and beings that I served how to make the offerings that they wanted, not the offerings that I wanted to give them. Thus I began to have more compassion for the whole situation—any situation.*

---

[39] Kleshas are habitual patterns or neurotic clingings.

*Sometimes people would ask me questions about what had happened to me. When I began to explain, I found myself explaining experiences in Buddhist terms, because that's what I had been taught. It was the only explanation that made any sense in relationship to the story. So Buddhism returned as a path. I had attended seven of the twelve or so three-month seminaries that Rinpoche had given. But because of my ignorance and confusion, I retained little or no knowledge of the teachings. So for the next ten years after Rinpoche's death, I read and reread all the seminary transcripts. I also studied and read many other related Buddhist texts. In the beginning, I advanced very slowly in my knowledge and understanding. But I would go over them again and again. Then, gradually, I found I could understand some of the concepts.*

*When I became angry, depressed, disillusioned, confused, or fearful of how to proceed, my teachers were always there in my thoughts and in my dreams. It was as if we had never parted. And through them I found the compassion that I had so much wanted to give to others and that had eluded me for so long.*

*Now I am an old man with long white hair and I walk with a slight limp, sometimes supported by a wooden cane. My personal secretary, who is also a student of mine, is typing this manuscript on a computer. We are sitting together in a small cottage overlooking Merrymeeting Bay, in the state of Maine. From within emptiness, in the sky before us, innumerable forms of the chief Jetsunma and her retinue descend. As they dissolve into the top of her head, joy and power increase. From their speech comes a garland of consonant mantras, red and white. As they dissolve into her throat, energy and power increase. From their heart comes a stream of boddhichita, of the nature of the five wisdoms. As it dissolves into her heart, the wisdom of bliss and emptiness is born in her being. The devis dissolve each into each and they become inseparable. That is the inner offering. Then in the supreme palace of mahamudra there resides bodhisattva Caryamati. That is only a name, only a sign, mere sophistry. Just as all dharmas have no reality, my very mind is*

*groundless, rootless, beyond the extremes of conditions. Although many things occur, realize the appearance and mind as the nondual, ungraspable dharmakaya.* That is a description of the indescribable fourth abhisheka.[40]

*There is a world beyond the one our projections and habitual patterns manifest. We act rather like the dog with the blindfold. Rinpoche always said that if the blindfold were to be removed too suddenly one would die of a heart attack. The sight of the real world, the total groundlessness and spaciousness, would cause such instant, terrifying fear that our hearts would burst. There is still, even in this dark age, an enlightened lineage of beings and you are being invited to join with them. Perhaps you will have to surrender some of your stuff—whatever you've collected. But if you have within you the desire to explore, to see, to hear, to taste, or smell, to experience the universe, then you should be like a patient with an incurable disease and seek a teacher to become your doctor. Please, do not waste a minute to begin that endeavor.*

*There are many groups of people that form around the idea of studying the Buddhist teachings without a teacher. This is rather like going to a restaurant and attempting to eat the menu. I realize that it is done with the best of intentions, but still the possibility of having your trip exposed or transformed without a teacher is at best zero. There is no possibility of lineage here, which is the continuum of the heart of the Buddha. From a morality point of view one could become a Brahmin, or follower of the rule, which is not the ultimate point of the Buddhist teachings.*

---

40 From the sadhana of Vajrayogini.

# Afterword

Out of the Celtic slime, lotus seeds grow and blossom. The Buddha holds up a flower and somebody smiles. Pure dharma without credentials then arises.

The following days were somewhat like being in a slow-moving dream world where the boundaries between being awake and being asleep were quite fuzzy. Rinpoche's body was moved from Halifax to Karmê Chöling in Vermont, where it was kept in a casket of salt until the day of his cremation on May 26 of that same year. Hundreds, if not thousands, of his students were present. Personally, I still remained in a quasi-dream-like state. I wore my Shambhala naval uniform and I remember thinking my hair was too long.

During the cremation ceremony a rainbow formed around the sun. There were other lights that flashed in the overcast sky. There was cannon fire, bagpipe music, and Tibetan horns. I kept repeating to myself, It is over. But I could not formulate what "it" was that was over. Nothing seemed to have changed very much. Somehow, the ghost of Rinpoche was inside me and there was no thought of separation. Looking back, one might say I was suffer-

ing from post-traumatic stress syndrome. But I don't remember being all that stressed out. It was just that Rinpoche was in my mind all the time, wherever I was or whatever I did.

"The foundation of samaya[41] is communication of the heart," Rinpoche would say. It seems that there has to be some heart connection with one's teacher. I remember my first meeting with Rinpoche. I felt a tremendous feeling of love just being in his presence. I don't know whether this was coming from him or from me or whether it just existed. The fact is that there was some undeniable connection which caused an openness of the heart essence. During my years with him, that connection remained as the ground even though my mind wandered from doubt to pissed-off-ness to anger. Those reactions were because I wanted to possess the teacher or to make logic out of his teachings.

While I worked with Rinpoche, his method was to focus my mind by having me pay attention to the myriad details of both the household in which we lived and his personal service. Every task had to be done in a specific way, whether it was making the bed, putting a new toilet roll in the bathroom, putting the exact amount of toothpaste on his toothbrush, combing or brushing his hair in a certain manner, handing him items, brushing his shoes, dressing him, cooking his meals, packing his clothes, or driving the car. Even answering his questions about what was happening in the mandala around him, or at least my perception of it, needed to be done exactly. I was in a very precise world.

Within that framework things could expand. Perception opened. Rather than organizing my world, the world existed and was sending messages. A plant doesn't organize the sun to send rays for it to grow, but nevertheless it receives the rays and it grows. It's quite a simple arrangement. There is some kind of openness beyond the obstacle of personal projection. Within that openness messages can be received.

---

[41] Samaya—A pledge or commitment to keep one's tantric vows.

My attempts to find some habitual pattern that I could count on in Rinpoche were all failures. Working with his mind was experiencing basic unconditioned space. At first this greatly alarmed me because I had no idea of how he managed to attain such a state. Through practice, study, and being his personal attendant I began to have flashes of realization that indicated my basic mind was the same as his.

Rinpoche rarely told me what to do concerning my relationships with others. However, he implied that I should relate to basic goodness. Since I was extremely sensitive to even the smallest comment he would make I didn't have to puzzle over queries. There arose in me a tremendous sense of longing which sometimes I felt could be satisfied by loving another. But my loving was too attached to my aloneness. I began to see how the interrelatedness of actions created a universe, and at times I experienced openness, softness, and the tremendous bliss of being free from habitual grasping.

People felt that I was crazy. Actually "crazy John Perks" became a joke. But since John Perks was a fabrication, then "just craziness" seemed to operate. It operated from the ground of not really having to do anything. Somehow the whole universe managed quite well without my consistent projection. I'm not sure how it managed to do this since I had previously thought I was the creator.

All the stories that I have written concerning my association with Rinpoche show that he was consistently undermining my reality and showing me that "form is emptiness and emptiness is no other than form."[42] Sometimes I think that while my mind did not actually get it one hundred percent on the spot, my body retained the memory. And my heart was such that it could not give up or, for that matter, could not go back on itself. The heart was intermixed with the space of dharma, which was his mind.

After Rinpoche's death I traveled to New York City where I was interviewed and offered employment as a butler to Bill Cosby and his family. During my work for the Cosby family, thoughts

---

42 From the Prajnaparamita, the Heart Sutra.

of Celtic Buddhism still seemed quite remote and somewhat silly. I had images of being put ashore on some Celtic island, alone, wearing robes, and told to start a Celtic Buddhist center. Not knowing anyone or even able to speak the local language, this seemed to be a ridiculous project.

One day, while riding on the 5th Avenue bus, I looked down and saw a pair of black ebony hands with ivory nails. I realized at once that these were the hands of Maitreya Buddha, even though they were attached to the body of a middle-aged African-American woman. I did not want to leave the bus and continued to look at her hands until she got off at 168th Street.

I began to see Buddha in other people at different times of day and night. This was like being haunted and would occur whenever I was just sitting or not involved in any activity. During nighttimes I continually had dreams of Trungpa Rinpoche, mostly that he was not dead but was hiding out with some other sangha in an unknown location.

Around this time, it was revealed to the sangha that the Vajra Regent, Ösel Tendzin, had contracted AIDS several years prior and it had been kept a secret from the community. He had also had multiple partners and sexual relationships. The issues and feelings of deception caused tremendous emotional splits in the community. The political upheavals and enmity on all sides was pervasive, turning friend against friend. My relationship to the Vajradhatu community after Rinpoche's death was already tentative because he had instructed me to leave and be on my own. The situation with the Regent pushed me out even further.

While many old friends invited me to come and give talks at local dharma centers, they usually received letters from the Vajradhatu administration warning them against letting me speak. It seemed I was regarded as some type of renegade, for reasons which were unclear to me. I just assumed it was spiritual politics, as usual. Happily, those warnings were ignored by many of the local administrators. Nevertheless, any move that I made

toward becoming involved with Vajradhatu was seemingly repulsed. It was as if Trungpa Rinpoche's mandate for me to go out on my own continued to manifest.

He had asked me to write about how we worked together. After my daily work with the Cosbys, I would retire to the one-bedroom West Side apartment where I lived with my wife and son and I would sit in the corner scribbling into countless notebooks with mottled black-and-white covers. None of it made much sense.

Once, a friend and I were measuring a room for a new carpet. Standing, I held the tape to my heart. My friend on the other end said, "This is the lineage," and I had an immediate vision of the lineage going back to the Buddha. What my friend had actually said was "This is the length." I had another friend who went to consult a famous psychic, and as she was leaving, the psychic said to her offhandedly, "Oh, by the way, Celtic Buddhism is the right thing to do. People will think it strange at first, but it will last a thousand years."

Even with the felt presence of Trungpa Rinpoche and these continual visual and mental reminders of Celtic Buddhism, I stubbornly refused to do anything for many years. I didn't know how to start or even if I wanted to start. Even considering what to do about Celtic Buddhism became completely irritating. Once, in a fit of rage I threw a vase against the wall saying, "I refuse to do this until I have received certain signs." Within a week I received all the signs I had requested. The problem was that I felt that only people like Tilopa, Naropa, or Marpa start lineages, not an idiot like me who had little intellectual understanding of the dharma. Most of the time I couldn't remember whether there were three noble truths or four noble truths.

In 1989 I made a small attempt and registered the name Celtic Buddhism as a nonprofit organization. Then I didn't do anything for months. After a few more years I rented a room in an old office building, set up a shrine, and advertised with handout leaflets naming myself as the Venerable Seonaidh, which is Gaelic for

Johnny. For several months I sat alone in the shrine room, and gradually people began to trickle in.

I gave a talk at the first Buddhist Conference in America. I found myself talking about Trungpa Rinpoche because I didn't know anything about Celtic Buddhism. Here I met the Zen Master Kobutzu, alias Kevin Malone. I made him a Celtic Buddhist lineage holder, hoping to dump the load on someone else. It didn't quite work out that way, as all he did was to encourage me to fulfill my reluctant mission.

Then I began to meet people who were actually interested in the Celtic aspect and its relationship to Buddhism. I began to give dharma talks based on the work of Trungpa Rinpoche. Together with my students, we relived the happenings and the teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche and I had experienced. In the beginning the aloneness was awesome, made poignant by loving relationships with students who I actually considered to be companions on the path to liberation.

Slowly, Celtic Buddhism is being established. For me it means rethinking everything that had occurred during my years with Rinpoche and all he had taught me. Every small detail has had to be examined and reexperienced precisely. There has been quite a lot of skepticism and opposition from traditional Tibetan Buddhist groups to the development of a new lineage. But when they were asked, some realized Buddhist teachers began to help, mostly by saying, "You were with Trungpa Rinpoche long enough; you should know what to do."

The technicalities of teaching—all ceremonial aspects—have been easy. What I lacked for a long time was the confidence to accomplish what my teacher and I had worked on together. But finally I have given up looking for confidence and just do it.

Because of my teachers—Trungpa Rinpoche; His Holiness, Karmapa; and Khyentse Rinpoche—I had a great attachment to Tibetan Buddhism. Because of my duty to Celtic Buddhism I had to give up my attachments. This was quite a painful process, which took many years to accomplish.

At the time of writing this book I have a small group of companions in this endeavor, most of whom I have now spent several years with. We are on the threshold of expansion. Together we have learned quite a bit concerning Celtic Buddhism. I consistently work with my recollections of Rinpoche's teachings and my experience with him in defining Buddhism and its relationship to the Celtic Buddhist mandala. We have started a center, the AnaDáire Celtic Buddhist Center, and plan to further our study and practice of Buddhism and its relatedness to Celticism and how the two could combine to help all sentient beings achieve enlightenment.

In the study of Buddhist dharma, our basis is the Prajnaparamita Sutra (the Heart of Sutra.) We always come back to Prajnaparamita. If one were to chose one practice and study it, the Prajnaparamita would be that practice. Other meditation practices we are involved in are shamatha vipashyana, tonglen, Vajrayana Deity Yoga, Chöd, and Dzogchen.

In the Celticness we find a great field of shamanistic practices. We are working with these—using dream, intuition, auspicious coincidence, and information of experiences where Buddhism was intermixed with local religious traditions.

In some sense we always have to go back to square one in our relationship to Buddhism or Celticness. Rinpoche always said to me, "Keep it simple." I always endeavor to do that while at the same time allowing my companions a large field of exploration for their personal experiences. In this lineage, personal path or individuality of personal path intermix with that of the sangha. Sometimes people are impatient with other peoples' eccentricities on the path of enlightenment. Rinpoche continually used our eccentricities to point out the intolerance of others. At this stage our group is quite homogeneous, but when expansion occurs, problems will arise and one will have to relate to one's practice of meditation and heart of compassion.

We are called the Crazy Heart lineage of Celtic Buddhism—"Crazy," because from the aspects of nonduality a person might appear crazy to a logical mind. This would be rather like the

reaction you might have if a flower started to speak to you. You would either think you were crazy or it was crazy. "Heart" is the connection with the lineage, which are the Buddhas and bodhisattvas (or enlightened beings) who have preceded us, are with us in the present, and will appear in the future. We are "Celtic," because our relationship to the experience of being alive was transformed into mythology, dream, art, science, history, literature, and spirituality as an essence that came to be known as Celtic, another cultural aspect that is interrelated with other groups of beings and their expression—such as Tibetan, African, or Asian. "Buddhism," is because we are followers of the teachings of the Buddhas.

Personally, I have no fixed or clear idea about how Celtic Buddhism will finally manifest. My own personal feelings are that it should take a long time to form itself and then, I hope that having formed itself, it should benefit beings rather than become an inhibitor to their exploration of the universe. In other words, it should become the umbrella as well as the rain itself.

Rinpoche: "Johnny, have you ever been to Iona?"

Johnny: "Iona! You mean the island in Scotland? No, Sir."

Rinpoche: "You should go there after I die."

Johnny (alarmed): "You are not going to die!"

Rinpoche (reassuringly): "No, of course not; we will grow old together. Perhaps sometime you could go to Iona and read the Sadhana of Mahamudra in the cathedral."

Johnny: "Why?"

Rinpoche: "The air is very clear there. You will like it."

Johnny: "Okay, Sir. I'll do it."

Rinpoche: "Great! Let's drink to that."

They both drank sake.

In the summer of 2002 Johnny read the Sadhana of Mahamudra in the cathedral watchtower next to Saint Columba's shrine on the island of Iona. I realized again: Rinpoche manifested as Saint Columba and Johnny as Diarmait, his servant. History

continued to repeat itself throughout the ages. The sound of that loving relationship would never end.

*In the glorious display of all beings,*
*stretching into the limitless universe,*
*never created, never ending.*
*From a billion suns,*
*which are the heart centers of all the buddhas,*
*resonates the sound of mantra.*

*The gift of dharma,*
*given in total awareness,*
*love and compassion.*
*Seen in the fall of a leaf,*
*movement of grass,*
*crash of thunder,*
*unexplained flight of monarchs,*
*eyes of dragonfly,*
*foot of ant.*

*Through ignorance, anger, possessiveness, fear,*
*illusionary obstacles of all kinds,*
*simplicity of what was experienced,*
*lineage of continuous endless compassion,*
*illusion of self is realized.*
*Union of samsara and nirvana manifests.*

*Inexplicably,*
*there is nothing to understand.*
*There is only*
*Prajnaparamita.*

"Are these awards and appointments fact or fiction?" I asked.
"Both," he answered.

## EDICT

In the name of the Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Rigden, his glorious Sakyong on earth, Dorje Dradul of Mukpo Dong, hereby installs

YESHE TUNGPA, JOHN A. PERKS

as

KUSUNG DAPÖN

Proclaimed and Sealed at The Kalapa Court, the Seat of the Kingdom of Shambhala, by the Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Sakyong Mukpopa, the glorious Dorje Dradul, in the year of the Earth Horse of the sixteenth Rapjung, the first month, the twenty-seventh day; March 5, 1978.

<u>AWARD</u>

In the name of the Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Rigden, his glorious Sakyong on earth, the Dharmaraja Dorje Dradul of Mukpo Dong, hereby awards

YESHE TUNGPA, JOHN PERKS, O.L.K., M.H.M.H.

THE KUSUNG DAPÖN

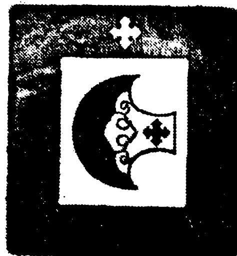
for merit in the service of the Dorje Dradul's military

THE IRON WHEEL

OF THE KINGDOM OF SHAMBHALA

Proclaimed and sealed at The Kalapa Court by the Heavenly-appointed Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Sakyong Mukpopa Dorje Dradul of the Kingdom of Shambhala, in the year of the Earth Sheep of the Sixteenth Rapjung, the first month, the first day; February 27, 1979.







THE KALAPA COURT

APPOINTMENT

In the name of the Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Rigden, his glorious Sakyong on earth, the Dharmaraja Dorje Dradul of Mukpo Dong, hereby admits

JOHN ANTHONY PERKS, O.L.K.

*for outstanding contribution to the Culture of the Kingdom of Shambhala*

THE ORDER OF ELEGANCE

OF THE KINGDOM OF SHAMBHALA

Proclaimed and sealed at the Kalapa Court by the Heavenly-appointed Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Sakyong Mukpopa Dorje Dradul of the Kingdom of Shambhala, in the year of the Iron Monkey of the Sixteenth Rapjung, the first month, the first day; February 17, 1980.





THE KALAPA COURT

# PROCLAMATION

In the name of the Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Rigden, his glorious Sakyong on earth, the Dharmaraja Dorje Dradul of Mukpo Dong, hereby creates

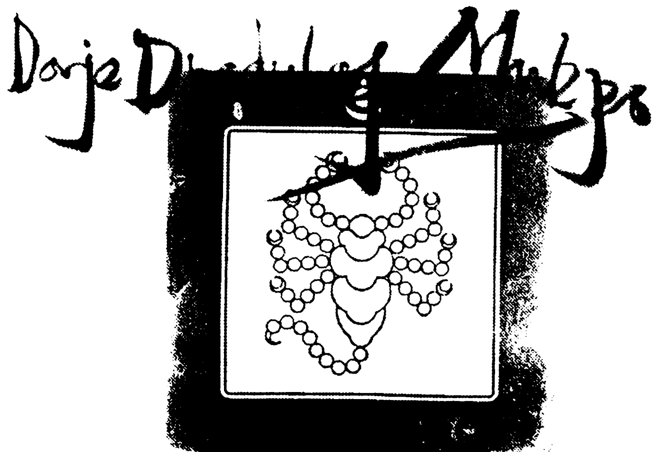
YESHE TUNGPA
JOHN ANTHONY PERKS, O.L.K., O.E.

WARRIOR

of the Most Radiant and Perky

ORDER OF THE LION OF KALAPA

PROCLAIMED AND SEALED at The Kalapa Court by the Heavenly-Appointed Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Sakyong Mukpopa Dorje Dradul of the Kingdom of Shambhala, in the year of the Iron Bird of the Sixteenth Rapjung, the first month, the first day; February 5, 1981.





THE KALAPA COURT

APPOINTMENT

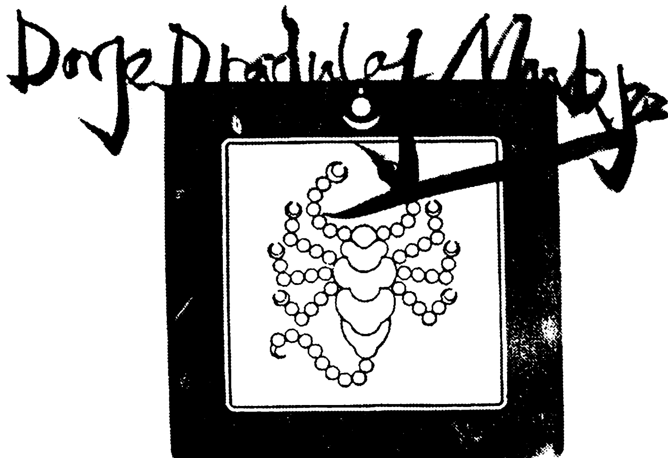
In the name of the Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Rigden, his glorious Sakyong on earth, the Dharmaraja Dorje Dradul of Mukpo Dong, hereby appoints

YESHE TUNGPA, JOHN A. PERKS, O.L.K., O.E.

to the office of

CHAMBERLAIN

PROCLAIMED AND SEALED at The Kalapa Court by the Heavenly-Appointed Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Sakyong Mukpopa Dorje Dradul of the Kingdom of Shambhala, in the year of the Iron Bird of the Sixteenth Rapjung, the first month, the first day; February 5, 1981.





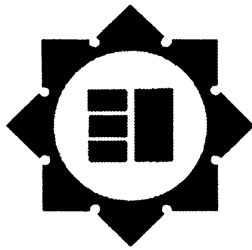
THE KALAPA COURT

Bonnie Johnny Forever

Meeting with you is a test of one's gallantry
Meeting with you is so tempting
That I want to grow old with you.
So we could be strong together.
Discovering such a bonnie Johnny
Is equal to meeting living basic goodness.
It is one of the best treasures that
the Mukpo family discovered.
We would like to [illegible] you as part
of o[illegible]
Please j[illegible]h
As the [illegible] Kusung Dapön
Our f[illegible] [illegible] Bonnie Johnny.
May the [illegible] you.
Happy [illegible]
Our love and [illegible] to you on this occasion
And for[illegible] years to come.

Meeting with you is a test of one's gallantry
Meeting with you is so tempting
That I want to grow old with you.
So we could be strong together.
Discovering such a bonnie Johnny
Is equal to meeting living basic goodness.
It is one of the best treasures
that the Mukpo family discovered.
We would like to welcome you as part
of our family.
Please join and stay with us
As the Chamberlain, the Kusung Dapön
Or for that matter, just basic bonnie Johnny.
May the Rigden Fathers protect you.
Happy Birthday.
Our love and affection to you on this occasion
And for many years to come.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche
March 13, 1981



DORJE KASUNG

ouncil of the Makkyi Rapjam

APPOINTMENT

In the name of the Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Rigden, his glorious Sakyong on earth, the Makkyi Rapjam Dorje Dradul of Mukpo Dong, hereby commends

SIR JOHN A. PERKS

for exemplary loyal service and
historic contribution in the office
of first Kusung Dapon of the
Dorje Kasung of the Kingdom of Shambhala

and hereby appoints him to the office of

TSOMAK DAPON, COMMODORE

Of the Purnachandra Division

of the Dorje Kasung of the

Kingdom of Shambhala

PROCLAIMED AND SEALED at The Kalapa Court by the Heavenly-Appointed Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Sakyong Mukpopa Dorje Dradul of the ingdom of Shambhala, in the year of the Water Dog the Sixteenth Rapjung, the first month, the first y; February 24, 1982.

VAJRADHATU SECURITY GUARD

BOULDER, CO 80302 303-444-0210 EXT. 315



THE KALAPA COURT

APPOINTMENT

In the name of the Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Rigden, his glorious Sakyong on earth, the Dharmaraja Dorje Dradul of Mukpo Dong, hereby designates

SIR JOHN A. PERKS, THE KUSHAP KYI KHYAP

for very devoted and outrageous service

to The Kalapa Court

GARUDA OF KALAPA

PROCLAIMED AND SEALED at The Kalapa Court by the Heavenly-Appointed Profound Brilliant Just Powerful All-Victorious Sakyong Mukpopa Dorje Dradul of the Kingdom of Shambhala, in the year of the Water Dog of the Sixteenth Rapjung, the first month, the first day; February 24, 1982.

# About the Author:

John Riley Perks, born in 1934, experienced in early childhood the bombing of England during World War II, which is written about in the manuscript. He went to university in England and immigrated to America in 1950. He started a commune and school in the Adirondacks which has been written about in the book *Pagan Time* by Micah Perks, published by Counterpoint in 2001. He met Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in 1973 and became his butler, attendant, and personal secretary for seven years. After this he became a butler for Bill Cosby for five years, Senator Jay Rockefeller for one year, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Acker for five years, and Mrs. Harris Farnstock for three years. Presently he is a Buddhist teacher at the AnaDáire Buddhist Center in Vermont and is currently writing a new book about Celtic Buddhism. John Riley Perks is married, has eight children, and lives in a cottage by the sea in Vermont.